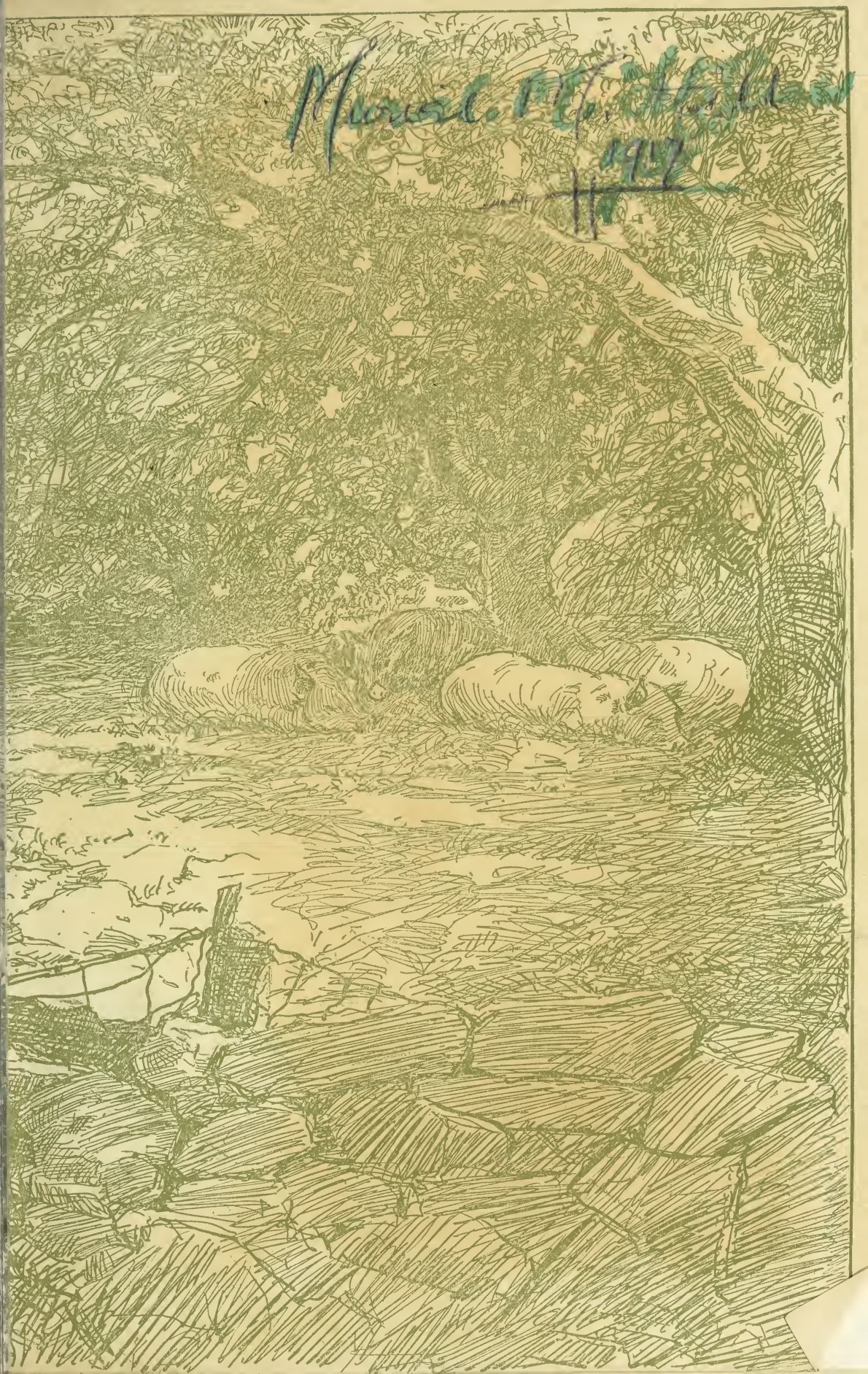


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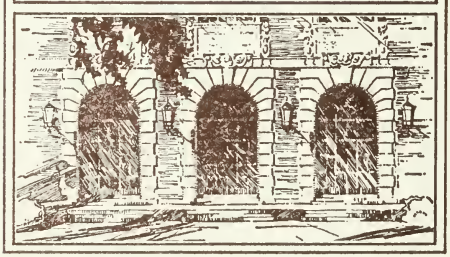
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THE IDYL OF TWIN FIRES



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At the New Theatre and Others
Barn Doors and Byways
Boy Scouts of Berkshire
Boy Scouts in the Dismal Swamp
Boy Scouts in the White Mountains
The Runaway Place (*with Elise Underhill*)
The Man Who Found Christmas

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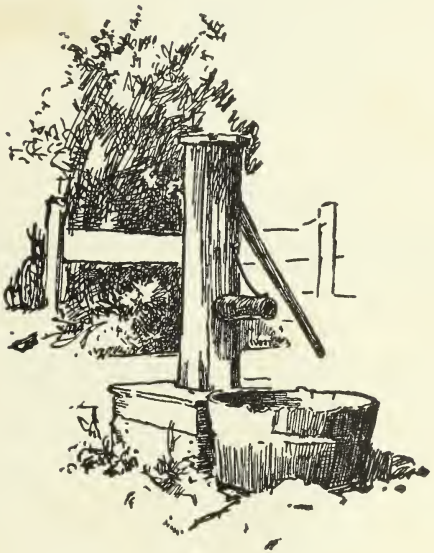


"So that is why you wanted my brook to come from the spring!"

The Idyl of Twin Fires

BY

WALTER PRICHARD EATON



Illustrated by Thomas Fogarty

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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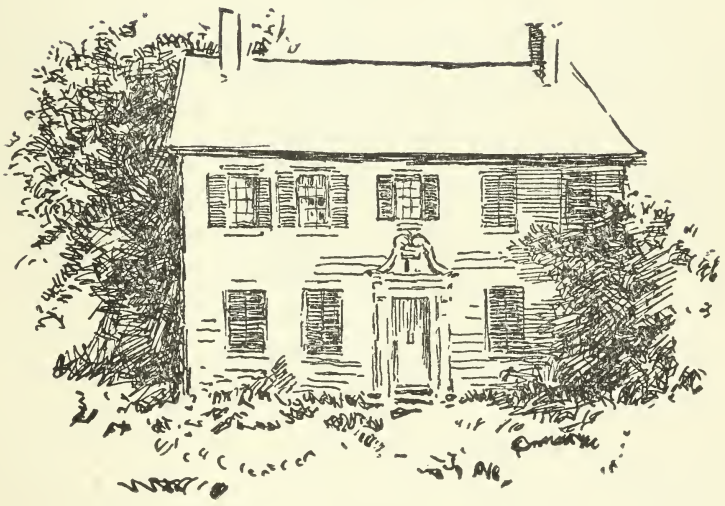
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THE IDYL OF TWIN FIRES







Chapter I

I BUY A FARM ON SIGHT

I WAS sitting at a late hour in my room above the college Yard, correcting daily themes. I had sat at a late hour in my room above the college Yard, correcting daily themes, for it seemed an interminable number of years—was it six or seven? I had no great love for it, certainly. Some men who go into teaching, and of course all men who become great teachers, do have a genuine love for their work. But I am afraid I was one of those unfortunates who take up teaching as a stop-gap, a means of livelihood while awaiting "wider opportunities." These opportunities in my case were to be the authorship of an epoch-making novel, or a great drama, or some similar masterpiece. I had been accredited with "brilliant promise" in my undergraduate days, and the college had taken me into the English department upon graduation.

Well, that was seven years ago. I was still correcting daily themes.

It was a warm night in early April. I had a touch of spring fever, and wrote vicious, sarcastic comments on the poor undergraduate pages of unexpressiveness before me, as through my open windows drifted up from the Yard a snatch of song from some returning theatre party. Most of these themes were hopeless. Your average man has no sense of literature. Moreover, by the time he reaches college it is too late to teach him even common, idiomatic expressiveness. That ought to be done in the secondary schools—and isn't. I toiled on. Near the bottom of the pile came the signature, James Robinson. I opened the sheet with relief. He was one of the few in the class with the real literary instinct—a lad from some nearby New England village who went home over Sunday and brought back unconscious records of his changing life there. I enjoyed the little drama, for I, too, had come from a suburban village, and knew the first bitter awakening to its narrowness.

I opened the theme, and this is what I read:

"The April sun has come at last, and the first warmth of it lays a benediction on the spirit, even as it tints the earth with green. Our barn door, standing open, framed a picture this morning between walls of golden hay—the soft rolling fields, the fringe of woodland beyond veiled with a haze of budding life, and then the far line of the hills. A horse stamped in the shadows; a hen strolled out upon the floor, cooting softly; there was a warm, earthy smell in the air, the distant church bell sounded pleasantly over the fields, and up the road

I heard the rattle of Uncle Amos's carryall, bearing the family to meeting. The strife of learning, the pride of the intellect, the academic urge—where were they? I found myself wandering out from the barnyard into the fields, filled with a great longing to hold a plow in the furrow till tired out, and then to lie on my back in the sun and watch the lazy clouds."

So Robinson had spring fever, too! How it makes us turn back home! I made some flattering comment or other on the paper (especially, I recall, starring the verb *coot* as good hen lore), and put it with the rest. Then I fell to dreaming. Home! I, John Upton, academic bachelor, had no home, no parents, no kith nor kin. I had my study lined with books, my little monastic bedroom behind it, my college position, and a shabby remnant of my old ambitions. The soft "coot, coot" of a hen picking up grain on the old barn floor! I closed my eyes in delicious memory—memory of my grandfather's farm down in Essex County. The sweet call of the village church bell came back to me, the drone of the preacher, the smell of lilacs outside, the stamp of an impatient horse in the horse sheds where liniment for man and beast was advertised on tin posters!

"Why don't I go back to it, and give up this grind?" I thought. Then, being an English instructor, I added learnedly, "and be a disciple of Rousseau!"

It was a warm April night, and I was foolish with spring fever. I began to play with the idea. I got up

and opened my tin box, to investigate the visible paper tokens of my little fortune. There was, in all, about $30,000, the result of my legacy from my parents and my slender savings from my slender salary, for I had never had any extravagances except books and golf balls. I had heard of farms being bought for $1,500. That would still leave me more than $1,200 a year. Perhaps, with the freedom from this college grind, I could write some of those masterpieces at last—even a best seller! I grew as rosy with hope as an undergraduate. I looked at myself in the glass—not yet bald, face smooth, rather academic, shoulders good, thanks to daily rowing. Hands hard, too! I sought for a copy of the *Transcript*, and ran over the real estate ads. Here was a gentleman's estate, with two butler's pantries and a concrete garage—*that* would hardly do! No, I should have to consult somebody. Besides $1,200 a year would hardly be enough to run even a $1,500 farm on, not for a year or two, because I should have to hire help. I must find something practical to do to support myself. What? What *could* I do, except put sarcastic comments on the daily themes of helpless undergraduates? I went to bed with a very poor opinion of English instructors.

But God, as the hymn remarks, works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. Waking with my flicker of resolution quite gone out, I met my chief in the English department who quite floored me by asking me if

I could find the extra time—"without interfering with my academic duties"—to be a reader for a certain publishing house which had just consulted him about filling a vacancy. I told him frankly that if I got the job I might give up my present post and buy a farm, but as he didn't think anybody could live on a manuscript reader's salary, he laughed and didn't believe me, and two days later I had the job. It would be a secret to disclose my salary, but to a man who had been an English instructor in an American college for seven years, it looked good enough. Then came the Easter vacation.

Professor Farnsworth, of the economics department, had invited me on a motor trip for the holidays. (The professor married a rich widow.)

"As the Cheshire cat said to Alice," he explained, "it doesn't matter which way you go, if you don't much care where you are going to; and we don't, do we?"

"Yes," I said, "I want to look at farms."

But he only laughed, too. "Anyhow, we won't look at a single undergraduate," he said.

In the course of our motor flight from the Eternal Undergraduate, we reached one night a certain elm-hung New England village noted for its views and its palatial summer estates, and put up at the hotel there. The professor, whose hobby is real estate values, fell into a discussion with the suave landlord on the subject, considered locally. (Being a state congressman,

he was unable to consider anything except locally!) The landlord, to our astonishment, informed us that building-sites on the village street and the nearby hills sold as high as $5,000 per acre.

"What does farm land cost?" I inquired sadly.

"As much as the farmer can induce you to pay," he laughed. "But if you were a farmer, you might get it for $100 an acre."

"I *am* a farmer," said I. "Where is there a farm for sale?"

The landlord looked at me dubiously. But he volunteered this information: "When you leave in the morning, take the back road, up the hollow, toward what we call Slab City. You'll pass a couple of big estates. About half a mile beyond the second estate, you'll come to a crossroad. Turn up that a hundred yards or so and ask for Milt Noble at the first house you come to. Maybe he'll sell."

It was a glorious April morning when we awoke. The roads were dry. Spring was in the air. The grass had begun to show green on the beautiful lawns of Bentford Main Street. The great elms drooped their slender, bare limbs like cathedral arches. We purred softly up the Slab City road, pleased by the name of it, passed the two estates on the hill outside of the village, and then dipped into a hollow. As this hollow held no extended prospect, the summer estates had ceased on its brim. The road became the narrow dirt track of

tradition, bramble-lined. Presently we reached the crossroad. A groggy sign-board stood in the little delta of grass and weeds so characteristic of old New England crossroads, and on it a clumsy hand pointed to "Albany." As Albany was half a day's run in a motor car, and no intervening towns were mentioned, there was a fine, roving spirit about this groggy old sign which tickled me.

We ran up the road a hundred yards of the fifty miles to Albany, crossed a little brook, and stopped the motor at what I instantly knew for my abode.

I cannot tell you how I knew it. One doesn't reason about such things any more than one reasons about falling in love. At least, I'm sure I didn't, nor could I set out in cold blood to seek a residence, calculating water supply, quality of neighbours, fashionableness of site, nearness to railroad, number of closets, and all the rest. I saw the place, and knew it for mine—that's all.

As the motor stopped, I took a long look to left and right, sighed, and said to the professor: "I hereby resign my position as instructor in English, to take effect immediately."

The professor laughed. He didn't yet believe I meant it.

My grandfather was an Essex County farmer, and lived in a rectangular, simple, lovely old house, with woodsheds rambling indefinitely out behind and a big

barn across the road, with a hollow-log watering trough by a pump in front and a picture of green fields framed by the little door at the far end. Grandfather's house and grandfather's barn, visited every summer, were the sweetest recollections of my childhood. And here they were again—somewhat dilapidated, to be sure, with a mountain in the barn-door vista instead of the pleasant fields of Essex—but still true to the old Yankee type, with the same old wooden pump by the hollow-log trough, green with moss.

I jumped from the motor and started toward the house on the run.

"Whoa!" cried the professor, laughing, "you poor young idiot!" Then, in a lower tone, he cautioned: "If our friend Milt sees you want this place so badly, he'll run up the price. Where's your Yankee blood?"

I sobered down to a walk, and together we slipped behind a century-old lilac bush at the corner of the house, and sought the front of the dwelling unobserved. The house was set with its side to the road, about one hundred feet into the lot. A long ell ran out behind, evidently containing the kitchen and then the sheds and outhouses. The side door, on a grape-shadowed porch, was in this ell, facing the barn across the way. The main body of the dwelling was the traditional, simple block, with a fine old doorway, composed of simple Doric pilasters supporting a hand-hewn broken pediment—now, alas! broken in more than an archi-

tectural sense. It was a typical house of the splendid carpenter-and-builder period of a century ago.

This front door faced into an aged and now sadly dilapidated orchard. Once there had been a path to the road, but this was now overgrown, and the door-steps had rotted away. The orchard ran down a slope of perhaps half an acre to the ferny tangle of the brook bed. Beyond that was a bordering line of ash-leaf maples, evidently marking the other road out of which we had turned. The winters had racked the poor old orchard, and great limbs lay on the ground. What remained were bristling with suckers. The sills of the house were still hidden under banks of leaves, held in place by boards, to keep out the winter cold. There were no curtains in the windows, nor much sign of furniture within. From this view the old house looked abandoned. It had evidently not been painted for twenty years.

But, as I stood before the battered doorway and looked down through the storm-racked orchard to the brook, I had a sudden vision of pink trees abloom above a lawn, and through them the shimmer of a garden pool and the gleam of a marble bench or, maybe, a wooden bench painted white. On the whole, that would be more in keeping. This Thing called gardening had got hold of me already! I was planning for next year!

"You could make a terrace out here, instead of a veranda," I was saying to the professor. "White

wicker furniture on the grass before this Colonial doorway! It's ideal!"

He smiled. "How about the plumbing?" he inquired.

I waved away such matters, and we returned around the giant lilac tree to the side door, searching for Milton Noble. A bent old lady peered over her spectacles at us, and allowed Milt wuz out tew the barn. He was, standing in the door contemplating our car.

"Good morning," said I.

"Mornin'," said he, peering sharply at me with gray eyes that twinkled palely above a great tangle of white whisker.

"A fine old house you have," I continued.

"Hed first-growth timber when 'twas built. Why wouldn't it be?" He spat lazily, and wiped the back of his hand across his whiskers.

"We hear you want to sell it, though?" My sentence was a question.

"Dunno whar you heerd thet," he replied. "I hain't said I did."

We mentioned the innkeeper's name.

"Humph," said Milt, "Tom knows more about folks sometimes then they do."

"Don't you want to sell?" said I.

"Wanter buy?" said he.

"I might," said I.

"I might," he answered.

There was not the slightest expression of mirth on his face. The professor did not know whether to laugh or not. But I laughed. I was born of Yankee stock.

"How about water?" I asked, becoming very practical.

"Well," he said, "thet never dried up. Town main comes down the ro'd yander, from the Slab City reservoar. You kin tap thet if well water hain't good enough fer ye."

"Bathrooms?" I suggested.

The old man spat again. "Brook makes a pool sometimes down yander," he replied, jerking his thumb.

"Suppose we take a look into the house?" suggested the professor.

The old man moved languidly from the door. As he stepped, his old black trouser leg pulled up over his shoe top, and we saw that he wore no stockings. He paused in front of the motor car. "How much did thet benzine buggy cost?" he asked.

"Four thousand dollars," said the owner.

The gray eyes darted a look into the professor's face; then they became enigmatic. "Powerful lot o' money," he mused, moving on. "Whar's yourn?" he added to me.

"If I had one of those, I couldn't have your farm," said I.

He squinted shrewdly. "Dunno's yer kin, anyway, do ye?" was his reply.

He now led us into the kitchen. We saw the face of the old lady peering at us from the "butt'ry." A modern range was backed up against a huge, old-fashioned brick oven, no longer used. A copper pump, with a brass knob on the curved handle, stood at one end of the sink—"Goes ter the well," said Milt. The floor was of ancient, hardwood planking, now worn into polished ridges. A door led up a low step into the main house, which consisted, downstairs, of two rooms, dusty and disused, to the left, and two similar rooms, used as bedrooms, to the south (all four containing fireplaces), and a hall, where a staircase with carved rail led to the hall above, flanked by four chambers, each with its fireplace, too. Over the kitchen was a long, unfinished room easily converted into a servant's quarters. Secretly pleased beyond measure at the excellent preservation of the interior, I kept a discreet silence, and with an air of great wisdom began my inspection of the farm.

Twenty acres of the total thirty were on the side of the road with the house, and the lot was almost square —about three hundred yards to a side. Down along the brook the land had been considered worthless. South of the orchard it had grown to sugar maple for a brief space, then to young pine, evidently seedlings of some big trees now cut down, with a little tamarack swamp in the far corner. The pines again ran up the southern boundary from this swamp. The brook flowed

cheerily below the orchard, wound amid the open grove of maples, and went with a little drop over green stones into the dusk of the pines. The rest of the land, which lay up a slope to a point a little west of the house and then extended along a level plateau, was either pasture or good average tillage, fairly heavy, with subsoil enough to hold the dressing. It had, however, I fancied, been neglected for many years, like the tumbling stone walls which bounded it, and which also enclosed a four or five acre hayfield occupying the entire southwestern corner of the lot, on the plateau. The professor, who married a summer estate as well as a motor car, confirmed me in this. Behind the barn, on the other side of the road, the rectangular ten-acre lot was rough second-growth timber by the brook, and cow pasture all up the slope and over the plateau.

Returning to the house, we took a sample of the water from the well for analysis. When I asked the old lady (I made the mistake of calling her Mrs. Noble) to boil the bottle and the cork first, I think they both decided I was mad.

"Now," said I, as I put the sample in my pocket, "if this water gets a clean bill of health, what do you want for the place?"

"What'll you give me?" said Milt.

"Look here," said I, "I'm a Yankee, too, and I can answer one question with another just as long as you can. What do you expect me to give you?"

The old man spat meditatively, and wiped his whiskers with the back of his hand.

"Pitt Perkins got $500 an acre for his place," said he.

"They get $500 a square foot on Wall Street in New York," I replied.

"And 'twon't grow corn, neither," said Milt, with his nearest approximation to a grin.

"It pastures lambs," put in the professor.

But Milt didn't look at him. He gazed meditatively at the motor. "So thet contraption cost $4,000, did it?" he mused, as if to himself, "and 'twon't drop a calf, neither. How'd $8,000 strike you?"

I took the bottle of well water from my pocket, and extended it toward him. "Here," I said, "there's no need for me to have this analyzed."

"Seven?" said he.

"Four!" said I.

"Six?" said he.

"Not a cent over four," said I.

"All right," said he, "didn't much want ter sell anyhow." And he pocketed the bottle.

I climbed into the car, and the professor walked in front and cranked it. (It had a self-starter, which was, as they usually appear to be, out of commission.) The engine began to throb. The professor put on his gloves.

"Five," said Milt, "with the hoss an' two Jerseys an' all the wood in the shed."

He was standing in the road beside the modern motor

car, a pathetic old figure to me, so like my grandfather in many ways, the last of an ancient order. Poverty, decay, was written on him, as on his farmstead.

"It's yours!" I cried.

I got out of the car again, and we made arrangements to meet in the village and put the deal through. Then I asked him the question which had been pressing from the first. "Why do you sell?"

He pointed toward a distant estate, with great chimneys and gables, crowning a hill. "This hain't my country no more," he said, with a kind of mournful dignity. "It's theirs, and theirs, and theirs. I'm too old ter l'arn ter lick boots an' run a farm fer another feller. I wuz brought up on corn bread, not shoe polish. I got a daughter out in York State, an' she'll take me in if I pay my board. I guess $5,000 'll last me 'bout as long as my breath will. Yer got a good farm here—if yer can afford ter put some money back inter the soil."

He looked out over his fields and we looked mercifully into the motor. The professor backed the car around, and we said good-bye.

"Hope the bilin' kills all them bugs in the bottle," was the old man's final parting.

"Well!" I cried, as we spun down over the bridge at my brook, "I've got a country estate of my own! I've got a home! I've got freedom!"

"You've got stuck," said the professor. "He'd have taken $4,000."

"What's a thousand dollars, more or less?" said I. "Besides, the poor old fellow needs it worse than I do."

"It's a thousand dollars," replied my companion.

"Yes, to you," I answered. "You are a professor of economics. But to me it's nothing, for I'm an instructor in English."

"And the point is?"

"That I'm going back home!" I cried. And I took off my hat and let the April wind rush through my hair.

Chapter II

MY MONEY GOES AND MY FARMER COMES

THREE days later I got a report on the water from a chemist in Springfield; it was pure. Meanwhile, I had decided to tap the town main, so it didn't make any difference, anyway. We ran the car back to Bentford, and I closed the deal, took an inventory of the farm implements and equipment which went with the place, made a few hasty arrangements for my permanent coming, and hastened back to college. There I remained only long enough to see that the faculty had a competent man to fill my unexpired term (so much of conscience remained to me!), to pack up my books, pictures, and furniture, to purchase a few necessary household goods, or what I thought were necessary, and to consult the college botanical department. Professor Grey of the department assigned his chief assistant at the gardens to my case. He took me to Boston, and, armed with my inventory, in one day he spent exactly $641 of my precious savings, while I gasped, helpless in my ignorance. He bought, it appeared to me, barrels of seeds, tons of fertilizers, thousands of wheel hoes for horse and man, millions of pruning saws

and spraying machines, hotbed frames and sashes, tomato trellises, and I knew not what other nameless implements and impedimenta.

"There!" he cried, at 5 P.M. "Now you can make a beginning. You'll have to find out this summer what else you need. Probably you'll want to sink another $600 in the fall. I told 'em not to ship your small fruits—raspberries, etc.—till you ordered 'em to. You won't be ready for some weeks. The first thing you must do now is to hire a first-class farmer and call in a tree specialist. Meanwhile, I'll give you a batch of government bulletins on orchards, field crops, cattle, and the like. You'd better read 'em up right away."

"You're damn cheerful about it!" I cried. "You talk as if I were a millionaire, with nothing to do but read bulletins and spend money!"

"That's about all you will do, for the next twelve months," he grinned.

This was rather disconcerting. But the die was cast, and I came to a sudden realization that seven years of teaching the young idea how to punctuate isn't the best possible training for running a farm, and if I were to get out of my experiment with a whole skin I had got to turn to and be my own chief labourer, and hereafter my own purchaser, as well.

All that night I packed and planned, and the next morning I left college forever. I slipped away quietly, before the chapel bell had begun to ring, avoiding all

tender good-byes. I had a stack of experiment station bulletins in my grip, and during the four hours I spent on the train my eyes never left their pages. Four hours is not enough to make a man a qualified agriculturist, but it is sufficient to make him humble. I had left college without any sentimental regrets, my head being too full of plans and projects. I arrived at Bentford without any sentimental enthusiasms, my head being too full of rules for pruning and spraying, for cover crops, for tuberculin tests, for soil renewal. I'm sorry to confess this, because in all the "back to the land" books I have read—especially the popular ones, and I want this one to be popular, for certain very obivous reasons—the hero has landed on his new-found acres with all kinds of fine emotions and superb sentiments. The city folks who read his book, sitting by their steam radiators in their ten by twelve flats, love to fancy these emotions, glow to these sentiments. But I, alas, for seven long years preached realism to my classes, and even now the chains are on me; I must tell the truth. I landed at Bentford station, hired a hack, and drove at once to my farm, and my first thought on alighting was this: "Good Lord, I never realized the frightful condition of that orchard! It will take me a solid week to save any of it, and I suppose I'll have to set out a lot of new trees besides. More expense!"

"It's a dollar up here," said the driver of the hack, in a mildly insidious voice.

I paid him brusquely, and he drove away. I stood in the middle of the road, my suitcase beside me, the long afternoon shadows coming down through my dilapidated orchard, and surveyed the scene. Milt Noble had gone. So had my enthusiasm. The house was bare and desolate. It hadn't been painted for twenty years, at the least, I decided. My trunks, which I had sent ahead by express, were standing disconsolately on the kitchen porch. Behind me I heard my horse stamping in the stable, and saw my two cows feeding in the pasture. A postcard from one Bert Temple, my nearest neighbour up the Slab City road, had informed me that he was milking them for me—and, I gathered, for the milk. Well, if he didn't, goodness knew who would! I never felt so lonely, so helpless, so hopeless, in my life.

Then an odd fancy struck me. George Meredith made *his* living, too, by reading manuscripts for a publisher! The picture of George Meredith trying to reclaim a New England farm as an avocation restored my spirits, though just why, perhaps it would be difficult to make any one but a fellow English instructor understand. I suddenly tossed my suitcase into the barn, and began a tour of inspection over my thirty acres.

There was tonic in that turn! Twenty of my acres, as I have said, lay on the south side of the road, surrounding the house. The other ten, behind the barn, were pasture. The old orchard in front of the house

(which faced the east, instead of the road) led down a slope half an acre in extent to the brook. That brook ran south close to the road which formed my eastern boundary, along the entire extent of the farm—some three hundred yards. At first it flowed through a wild tangle of weeds and wild flowers, then entered a grove of maples, then a stand of white pines, and finally burbled out into a swampy little grove of tamaracks. I walked down through the orchard, seeing again the white bench across the brook, against the roadside hedge, and seeing now tall iris flowers besides, and a lily pool—all "the sweetest delight of gardens," as Sir Thomas Browne mellifluously put it. As I followed the brook into the maples and then into the sudden hushed quiet of my little stand of pines, I thought how all this was mine—my own, to play with, to develop as a sculptor molds his clay, to walk in, to read in, to dream in. Think of owning even a half acre of pine woods, stillest and coolest of spots! I planned my path beside the brook as I went along, and my spirits rose like the songs of the sparrows from the roadside trees beyond.

The bulk of my farm lay to the south of the house, on a gentle slope which rose from the brook to a pasture plateau higher than the dwelling. Most of the slope had been cultivated, and some of it had been ploughed in the fall. I climbed westward, a hundred yards south of the house, over the rough ground, looked into the hay-

field, and then continued along the wall of the hayfield, over ground evidently used as pasture, to my western boundary, where my acres met the cauliflower fields of my neighbour, Bert Temple.

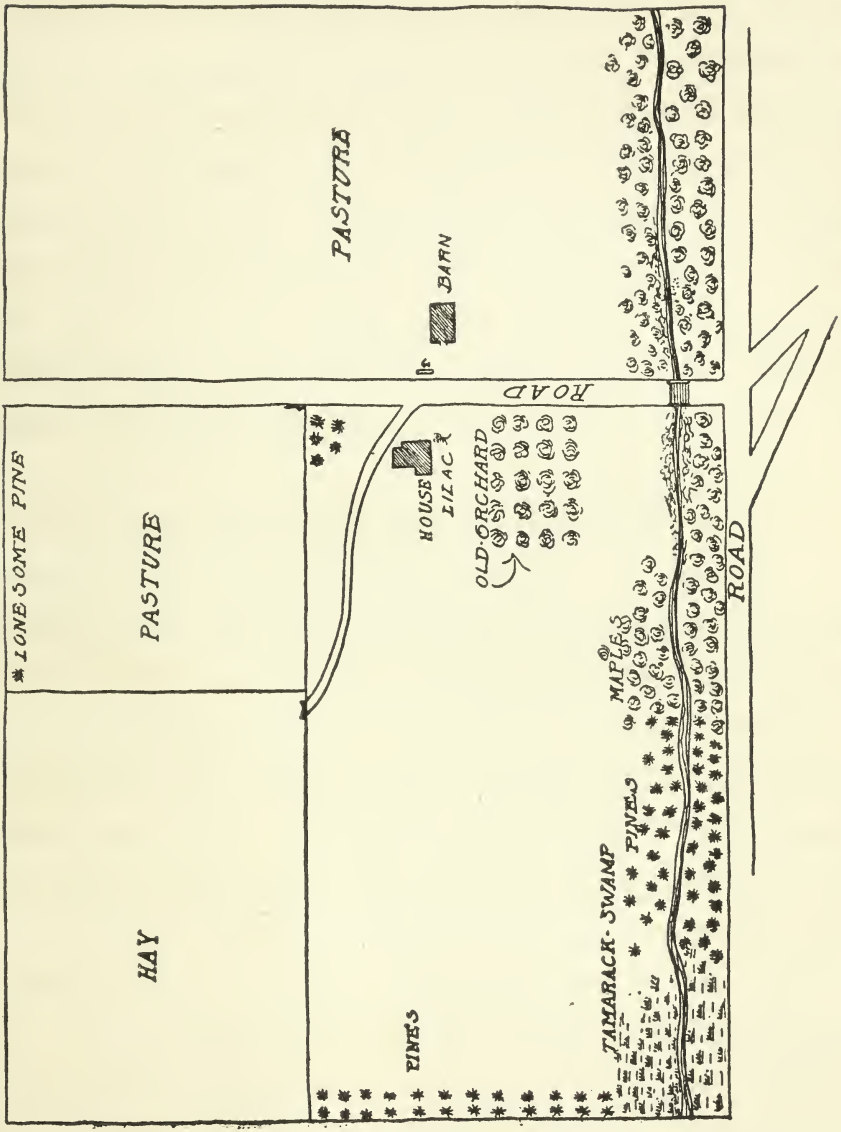
A single great pine, with wide-spreading, storm-tossed branches, like a cedar of Lebanon, stood at the stone wall, just inside my land. The wall, indeed, ran almost over its roots, a pretty, gray, bramble-covered wall, so old that it looked like a work of nature. Beneath the lower limbs of the pine, and over the wall, one saw the blue mountains framed like a Japanese print. Standing off a way, however, the pine stood out sharply against the hills and the sky, a noble veteran, almost black.

Then and there I saw my book plate—a coloured woodcut, green and blue, with the pine in black on the key block!

Then I reflected how I stood on soil which must be made to pay me back in potatoes for the outlay, stood, as it were, on top of my practical problem—and dreamed of book plates!

"*Somebody* ought to get amusement out of this!" I said aloud, as I set off for the barn, gathered up my suitcase, and climbed the road toward Bert Temple's.

If I live to be a hundred, I can never repay Bert Temple, artist in cauliflowers and best of friends in my hour of need. Bert and his wife took me in, treated me as a human, if helpless, fellow being, not as a "city


PASTURE
BARN
ROAD
LONESOME PINE
PASTURE
HOUSE
LILAC
OLD ORCHARD
MAPLES
ROAD
HAY
PINES
TAMARACK SWAMP
PINES

man" to be fleeced, and gave me the best advice and the best supper a man ever had, meantime assuring me that my cows had been tested, and both were sound.

The supper came first. I hadn't eaten such a supper since grandmother died. There were brown bread Joes —only rival of Rhode Island Johnny cake for the title of the lost ambrosia of Olympus. They were so hot that the butter melted over them instantly, and crisp outside, with delicious, runny insides.

"Mrs. Temple," said I, "I haven't eaten brown bread Joes since I was a boy. I didn't know the secret existed any more."

Mrs. Temple beamed over her ample and calico-covered bosom. "You must hev come from Essex or Middlesex counties," she said, "if you've et brown bread Joes before."

"Essex," said I.

"Essex!" she cried. "Well, well! I came from Georgetown. Bert, he's Middlesex. I dunno what we're doing out here in these ungodly, half York State mountains, but here we be, and the secret's with us."

"Let me have some more of the secret," said I. "I'm growing younger with every mouthful."

After supper Bert took me in hand. "First thing fer you to do's to git a farmer *and* carpenter," he said. "I kin git yer both, if yer want I should, an' not sting yer. Most noo folks thet come here gits stung. Seems like Bentford thinks thet's why they come!"

"I'm clay in your hands," said I.

"Wall, yer don't exactly know *me* intimately," said Bert with a laugh, "so yer'd better git a bit o' granite into yer system. Neow, ez to a farmer—there's Mike Finn. He's not French, ez yer might guess, but he's honest ez the 21st o' June is long, an' he's out of a job on account of the Sulloways hevin' sold their estate whar he wuz gardener an' the noo folks bringin' their own, an' he lives 'bout a quarter of a mile from your corner. He'll come an' his son'll help out with the heavy work, sech ez ploughin', which you'd better begin termorrer."

"Mike it is," said I. "What will he want for wages?"

"He'll ask yer $60 a month, an' take $45, an' earn it all," Bert answered. "We'll walk deown an' see him neow, ef yer like."

I liked, and in the soft, spring evening we set off down the road. "But," I was saying, "$45 a month for skilled labour seems to me a measly wage. I'm ashamed to offer it. Why, college instructors get as much as that! I shall offer Mike $50."

"Do yer want ter spile all the hired help in Bentford?" cried Bert.

"No," said I, "but Mike gets $50, and perhaps a raise if he makes good. I believe in the hire being worth the labourer. That's flat."

"Wal, then, ez to carpenters," Bert switched, seeing

that I could not be budged; "thar's good carpenters, an' bad carpenters, an' Hard Cider Howard. Hard Cider's fergotten more abeout carpent'rin' then most o' the rest ever knoo, and he ain't fergot much, neither. But he ain't handsome, and he looks upon the apple juice when it's yaller. Maybe yer don't mind looks, an' I kin keep Hard Cider sober while he's on your job. He'll treat yer fair, an' see thet the plumbers do, an' fix all them rotten sills ez good ez noo."

"What's that?" said I. "Rotten sills?"

"Sure," Bert answered. "Mean to tell me yer didn't know thet? Yer can't pack all yer sills with leaves fer a hundred years, an' not take 'em away summers half the time, an' *not* rot yer sills. I'd say, treat 'em with cement like they do trees neow."

I began to have visions of my remaining $24,000 melting away in sills.

"I suppose the barn is rotten, too?" said I, faintly, as an interrogation.

We were then passing the barn. Bert stepped in—the door wasn't locked—lit a lantern, came out with it, and led me around to one side. He held the lantern against one of the timbers which formed the foundation frame. It was a foot in diameter, and made of hand-hewn oak! Though it had never been guilty of paint, it looked as solid as a rock.

"Barn needs some patchin' and floorin' and a few

shingles," said Bert, "but it ain't doo to fall deown jest yit!"

He put the lantern back, and we walked on, turned the corner at my brook, and followed the other road along past my pines till we came to a small settlement of white cottages. At one of these Bert knocked. We were admitted by a pretty, blue-eyed Irish girl, who had a copy of Cæsar's Commentaries in her hand, into a tiny parlour where an "airtight" stove stood below a coloured chromo of the Virgin and Child, and a middle-aged Irishman sat in his shirt sleeves, smoking a pipe.

"Hello, Mike," said Bert, "this is Mr. John Upton, who's bought Milt Noble's place, an' wants a farmer *and* gardener. I told him you wuz the man."

"Sit down, sor, sit down," said Mike, offering a chair with an expansive and hospitable gesture. "Sure, let's talk it over."

The pretty daughter had gone back to her Cæsar by the nickel oil lamp, but she had one ear toward us, and I caught a corner of her eye, too—an extremely attractive, not to say provocative, eye.

"Well, now," Mike was saying, "sure I can run a farm, but what do I be gettin' for it?"

"Fifty a month," said I, "which includes milking the cows and tending furnace in winter."

"Sure, I got more than that on me last place and no cows at all."

"Ye're a liar, Mike," said Bert.

"That's a fightin' word in the ould country," said Mike.

"This ain't the old country, and yer got $45," Bert grinned. "Besides, yer'll be close to yer work. You wuz a mile an' a half frum the Sulloways. Thet makes up fer the milkin'."

"True, true," Mike replied, meditatively. "But what be yer runnin' the place for, Mr. Upton? Is it a real farmer ye'd be?"

"A real farmer," I answered. "Why?"

"Well, I didn't know. Onct I worked fer one o' them literary fellers that married rich, and he was always fer makin' me try new-fangled things in the ground instead o' good old cow manure. Begorra, he nigh drove the life out o' me with his talk o' bac-bac-bac somethin'—some kind of bugs, if ye can beat that—that he said made nitrogen. I've heard say yer wuz a literary feller, too, Mr. Upton, and I have me doubts."

"Well, I am a sort of a literary feller," I confessed, "but I never married a rich wife."

"Sure, ye're not so old to be past hopin'," Mike replied.

I shook my head, and added, "But it's you I want to be the real literary feller, Mike. You must write me a poem in potatoes."

Mike put back his head and roared. "It's a pome

yer want, is it?" he cried. "Sure, it's an oration I'll give ye. I'll grow ye the real home rule pertaters."

"Well," said I, rising, "do you begin to-morrow morning, and will your son help for a few weeks?"

"The mornin' it is," said Mike, "and Joe along."

I paused by the side of the girl. "All Gaul is divided into three parts," I laughed.

She looked up with a pretty smile, but Mike spoke: "Sure, but they give all three parts to Nora," he said, "so what was the use o' dividin' it? She thinks she's me mither instead o' me daughter!"

"I'll put you to bed in a minute," said Nora, while Mike grinned proudly at her.

"I'm going to like Mike," said I to Bert, as we walked back up the road.

"I knoo yer would soon ez I seen yer," Bert replied. "The only folks thet don't like Mike is the folks thet can't see a joke. Mike has a tolerable number o' dislikers."

"Well, I've got my farmer," said I, "and now I suppose I've got to find a housekeeper, as soon as the house is ready to live in. Nora would suit me."

"I reckon she would," Bert replied, "but she wouldn't soot Bentford."

"In other words, I want an oldish woman, very plain, and preferably a widow?"

"With a young son old enough ter help on the farm," Bert added with a grin.

"I don't suppose you know of just that combination?"

"Reckon I dew. You leave it to my old lady."

"Mr. Temple," said I, "seems to me I'm leaving everything to you."

"Wal, neow, yer might do a heap sight worse!" said Bert.

I went up to my chamber when we got back, and sat down beside my little glass lamp and did some figuring. I had $24,000 of my savings left, and out of that I subtracted another $2,000 for the carpenters and plumbers. That left me with an income from my investments of about $1,000 a year. Added to my alleged salary as a manuscript reader, along with what I hoped I could pick up writing, I recklessly calculated my annual income as a possible $3,000. Out of this I subtracted $600 for Mike's wages, $360 for a housekeeper, $400 for additional labour, $75 for taxes, and $500 for additions to my "plant," as I began to call my farm. That made a total of $1,935, and left me a margin of about $1,000 for food, wines, liquors, and cigars, magazines, rare etchings, first editions, golf club dues, golf balls, caddy hire, an automobile, some antique mahogany, a few Persian rugs, an Italian marble sundial, and several other trifles I desired.

I scanned my pad thoughtfully, and finally decided not to join the golf club till the following year.

Then it occurred to me that I ought, of course, to sell my farm produce for a handsome profit. Bert had

gone to bed, so I couldn't ask him how much I would be likely to realize. But with all due conservatism I decided that I could safely rejoin the golf club. So I did, then and there. Whereupon I felt better, and, picking out the manuscript of a novel from my bag, I went bravely at the task of earning my living.

Chapter III

NEW JOY IN AN OLD ORCHARD

THE following morning was a balmy and exquisite first of May, but realism again compels me to confess that, having been an English instructor for seven years, and having read manuscripts the night before till 2 A. M., I did not leap lightly from my couch at the breakfast call, nor did I sing ecstatically, as I looked from my window:

"*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai.*"

What I actually did was to curse to myself at having to clean my teeth in bitterly cold water, something I have always loathed. Nor was I greatly cheered by Mrs. Temple's coffee. The New England farmer's wife can cook everything but coffee. But there seems to be something in that simple art which completely baffles her. Perhaps the coffee has something to do with it!

Her cheery face, however, was not long to be resisted, and Bert hustled me off immediately after the meal to meet Hard Cider Howard, whom, by some rural wireless, he had already summoned.

As we walked down the road, I glanced toward my lone pine, and saw my horse and Mike's hitched to the plough, with Joe driving and Mike holding the handles. Across the green pasture, between the road and the hayfield, already four rich brown furrows were shining up to the sun.

"Well, Mike didn't wait long!" I exclaimed. "I wonder why he started in there?"

"I told him to," said Bert. "That's goin' ter be yer pertater crop this year."

"Is it?'" said I. "Why?" I felt a little peeved. After all, this was *my* farm.

"Cuz it's pasture land thet's good fer pertaters, an' yer don't need it fer the cows, an' it kin be worked ter give yer a crop right off, even though 'twant ploughed under in the fall," Bert answered. "You trust yer Uncle Hiram fer a bit, sonny."

I blushed at my own peevishness, and thanked him humbly. At the house we found awaiting a strange-looking man, small, wrinkled, unkempt, with a discouraged moustache and a nose of a decidedly brighter hue than the rest of his countenance. He was tapping at the sills of the house.

"How about it, Hard? Cement?" said Bert.

Hard Cider nodded to me, with a keen glance from his little, bloodshot eyes.

"Yep," he said. "Stucco over it. Brick underpinnin's be ez good ez noo. Go inside."

We stepped upon the side porch, Bert handing me the key and I opening the door of my new dwelling with a secret thrill. Hard Cider at once began on the kitchen floor, ripping up a plank to examine the timbers beneath. There was no cellar under the kitchen, but the timbers were, like those of the barn, huge beams of hand-hewn oak, and were sound.

"Plane them planks down and lay a maple floor over 'em," said Hard, with an air of finality.

"Very well," said I meekly. "But my woodwork has got to be cypress in the living-room. I insist on cypress."

"New step," he added, as we came to the door up into the main house.

"Hold on!" said I. "This door leads into the front hall. I don't want that. I want this door closed up and put into the north room, which I'm going to use for a dining-room."

"Ain't goin' ter eat in the kitchen, eh? Very well," said Hard. He examined the old door frame carefully, and jotted something in a dirty notebook, which he drew from his pocket, first wetting his flat carpenter's pencil on his tongue.

We found that the north room had apparently been used only as a kind of storage closet, doubtless because there was no heater in the house. It had never been papered, and the walls, with a little touching up, were ready for kalsomining. Hard examined the plaster with the loving eye of a connoisseur.

"Built ter last in them days," I heard him mutter.

The room extended half the depth of the house, which, to be sure, was not great. Beyond it was a second room, on the northeast corner, of the same size.

We now crossed the hall to the south side, where there were two corresponding rooms. Here, as on the other side, the chimney and fireplaces were on the inside walls, and the mantels were of a simple but very good colonial pattern, though they had been browned by smoke and time to dirt colour.

"Now I want these two rooms made into one," said I. "I want one of the doors into the hall closed up, and a glass door cut out of the south side to a pergola veranda. Can you do it?"

Hard examined the partition. He climbed on a box which we dragged in, and ripped away plaster and woodwork ruthlessly, both at the top and at places on the sides, all without speaking a word.

"Yep," he said finally, "ef yer don't mind a big crossbeam showin'. She's solid oak. Yer door, though, 'll have to be double, with a beam in the middle."

"Fine!" I cried. "One to go in by, one to go out. Guests please keep to the right!"

"Hev ter alter yer chimney," he added, "or yer'll hev two fireplaces."

"Fine again!" cried I. "A long room with two fireplaces, and a double-faced bookcase coming out at right

angles between them, with two settles below it, one for each fireplace! Better than I'd dreamed!"

"Suit yerself," said Hard.

We next arranged tentatively for a brick veranda with a pergola top on the southern end of the house, and then went upstairs. Here the four small chambers needed little but minor repairs and plaster work, save that over the dining-room, which was to be converted into the bathroom. The great space over the kitchen was to be cut into two servants' bedrooms, with dormer windows. It already had the two windows, one to the north and one to the south, and had evidently been used as a drying-room for apples and the like. Hard figured here for some time, and then led us silently downstairs again, and through the front door.

My front doorway had once been a thing of beauty, with two little panel windows at the sides, and above all, on the outside, a heavy, hand-carved broken pediment, like the top of a Governor Winthrop highboy. Hard looked at it with admiration gleaming in his eyes. "I'd ruther restore this than all the rest o' the job," he said, and his ugly, rumsoaked little face positively shone with enthusiasm.

"Go ahead," said I; "only I want the new steps of brick, widely spaced, with a lot of cement showing between. I'm going to terrace it here in front, too—a grass terrace for ten feet out."

"Thet's right, thet's right!" he exclaimed. "Now

I'll go order the lumber, an' bring yer the estimate termorrer."

"Seems to me the usual proceeding would be the other way around!" I gasped.

"Well, yer want me ter do the job, don't yer? Or don't yer?" he said brusquely.

"Of course, of course!" I amended hastily. "Go ahead!"

Hard climbed into a broken-down wagon, and disappeared. "Don't you worry," said Bert. "I'll see he treats yer right."

"It isn't that," I said sadly. "It's that I've just remembered I forgot to include any painters' bills in my own estimate."

Bert looked at me in a kind of speechless pity for a moment. Then he said slowly: "Wal, I'll be swizzled! Wait till I tell maw! An' her always stickin' up fer a college education!"

"Just for that, I'll show you!" cried I. "I never trimmed an apple tree in my life, but I'm going to work on this orchard, and I'm going to save it, all myself. It will be better than yours in three years."

"Go to it," laughed Bert. "Come back fer dinner, though. Neow I'll drive over ter the depot an' git yer freight. They telephoned this mornin' it had come."

"Good!" I cried. "You might bring me a bag of cement, too, and a gallon of carbolic acid."

"Ye ain't tired o' life so soon, be yer?"

"No," said I, "but I'm going to show you rubes how to treat an orchard."

Bert went off laughing, and presently I saw him driving toward town with his heavy wagon. I walked up to the plateau field to greet Mike. As I crested the ridge the field lay before me, the great, lone pine standing sentinel at the farther side; and half of it was frail, young green, and half rich, shining brown.

"She ploughs tough, sor," said Mike, as the panting horses paused for breath, "but she'll harrer down good. Be the seed pertaters come yit?"

"Bert has gone for them," said I. "Let me hold the plough once."

Mike, I fancied, winked at his son Joe, who was a strong lad of twenty, with an amiable Irish grin. So everybody was regarding me as a joke! Well, I was, even then, as strong as Mike, and I'd held a sweep, if not a plough! I picked up the handles and lifted the plough around, setting the point to the new furrow. Joe started the horses. The blade wabbled, took a mad skid for the surface, and the handles hit me a blow in the ribs which knocked my breath out. Mike grinned. I set my teeth and the ploughshare, and again Joe started the horses. Putting forth all my strength I held the plough under the sod this time, but the furrow I ploughed started merrily away from the straight line, in spite of all my efforts, and began to run out into the unbroken ground to the left. I pulled the plough back

again to the starting-point, and tried once more. This trip, when I reached the point where my first furrow had departed from the straight and narrow way, the cross strip of sod came over the point like a comber over a boat's bow, and the horses stopped with a jerk, while the point went down and again the handles smote me in the ribs.

"It ain't so azy as it looks," said Mike.

"I'll do it if I haven't a rib left," said I grimly.

And I did it. My first full furrow looked like the track of a snake under the influence of liquor, but I reversed the plough and came back fairly straight. I was beginning to get the hang of it. My next furrow was respectable, but not deep. But on the second return trip I ploughed her straight, and I ploughed her deep, and that without exerting nearly so much beef as on the first try. Most things are easy when you once know how.

On this return trip the sweat was starting from my forehead, and the smell of the horses and of the warm, fresh-turned earth was strong in my nostrils. I didn't look at my pine, nor think of book plates. I was proud at what I had done, and my muscles gloried in the toil. Again I swung the plough around, and drove it across the field, feeling the reluctant grass roots fighting every muscle of my arms.

"There," said I, triumphantly, "you plough all the rest as deep as that!"

"Begobs, ye'z all right!" cried Mike.

I went back again down the slope with all the joy of a small boy who has suddenly made an older boy recognize his importance. I went at once to the shed, found a rusty saw (for my pruning saws, of course, had not yet come), and descended upon the orchard. I had a couple of bulletins on pruning in my pocket, with pictures of old trees remorselessly headed down. I took a fresh look at the pictures, reread some of the text where I had marked it, and tackled the first tree, carefully repeating to myself: "Remove only a third the first year, remove only a third the first year."

This, I decided, quite naturally did not refer to dead wood. By the time I had the dead wood cut out of that first old tree, and all the water spouts removed (as I recalled my grandfather used to call them), which didn't seem necessary for new bearing wood, the poor thing began to look naked. On one side an old water spout or sucker had achieved the dignity of a limb and shot far into the air. I was up in the tree carefully heading this back and out when Bert came driving by with his wagon heaped to overflowing.

"Hi!" he called, "yer tryin' ter kill them trees entire!"

I got down and came out to the road. "You're a fine man and a true friend, Mr. Temple," said I, "but I'm going to be the doctor for this orchard. A chap's got to have *some* say for himself, you know."

"Well, they ain't much good, anyhow, them trees," said Bert cheerfully.

We now fell to unloading the wagon. We opened up the woodsheds and storehouse behind the kitchen, stowed in the barrels of seed potatoes, the fertilizers, the various other seeds, the farm implements, sprayers, and so on. The hotbed frames and sashes were put away for future use, as it was too late to need them now. The horse hoe Bert had not been able to bring on this trip. Next we got my books and furniture into the house or shed, and tired, hot, and dirty, we drove on up the road for dinner. As we passed the upper field, I saw that the ploughing was nearly done. The brown furrows had already lost their gloss, as my hands had already lost their whiteness.

"Well, I'm a farmer now!" said I, surveying my soil-caked boots and grimy clothes.

"Yer on the way, anyhow," said Bert. "But yer'll have ter cultivate thet field hard, seein's how it oughter hev been ploughed last fall."

That afternoon I went back to my orchard, got out my shiny and sharp new double-edged pruning saw, and sawed till both arms ached. I sawed under limbs and over limbs, right-handed and left-handed, standing on my feet and on my head. I obeyed the first rule, to saw close to the trunk, so the bark can cover the scar. I obeyed the rule to let light into the tops. I didn't head my trees down as much as the pictures indicated,

for I wanted my orchard before the house as a decoration quite as much as a source of fruit supply. One old tree, split by a winter storm, I decided to chop down entirely. About half-past three, as I supposed it to be, I went for an axe, and heard Mike putting the horse into the barn and calling the cows. I looked at my watch. It was five o'clock! I didn't get the axe, but walked back and surveyed the havoc I had wrought—dead limbs strewing the ground, bright-barked water spouts lying among them, tangles of top branches heaped high, and above this litter three old trees rising, apparently half denuded, with great white scars all over them where the limbs had been removed. I had gone that first day across half the top row of the orchard, and I suddenly realized that during the entire time I had been at work not a thought had crossed my mind except of apple trees and their culture. I had been utterly absorbed, joyfully absorbed, in the process of sawing off limbs! Where, said I to myself, are those poetic reflections, those delicious day dreams which come, in books, to the workers in gardens? Can it be that, in reality, the good gardener thinks of his job? Or am I simply a bad gardener?

I decided to go to the barn and ask Mike. I found him washing his hands, preparatory to milking, and looking extremely bored. He used an antiseptic solution which Bert had provided, for Bert was still buying my milk.

"Sure, it's silly rules they be makin' now about a little thing like milkin'," he said.

I wasn't ready to argue with him then, but I secretly resolved that I'd make him wear a milking coat, also. I asked abruptly: "Mike, what do you think about when you are working in the garden?"

Mike reflected quite seriously for a full moment, while the alternate ring of the milk streams sang a tune on the bottom of the pail.

"Begobs, Oi niver thought o' that before," he said. "Sure, it's interestin' to think what ye think about. Oi guess Oi thinks mostly o' me gardenin'. It ain't till Oi straightens the kink out o' me back and gits me lunch pail in the shade that Oi begins to wonder if the Dimicrats 'll carry the country or why we can't go sivin days without a drink, like the camels."

"You sort of have to keep your mind on your job, to do it right, eh?"

"Sure, if ye've got one to keep," Mike laughed.

The milk streams had ceased to ring. They were sizzling now, for the bottom of the pail was covered. There was a warm smell of milk in the stable, and of hay and cattle. Through the little door at the end I saw framed a pretty landscape of my pasture, then woods rising up a hill, and then the blue mountains, purpling now with sunset. My arms ached. My ribs, where the plough handles had hit, were sore. I was sleepily, deliciously, tired. I had done a real day's work. I was

rather proud of it, too, proud that I could stand so much physical toil. After all, it is human to glory in your muscles.

"Good night," I called to Mike, as I started for home.

"Good night, sor," he sang cheerily back.

Upon the plateau I saw my rusty old disk harrow—a legacy from Milt—standing on the brown earth. The furrows had disappeared. The field was almost ready for planting. I took a bath, rubbing my ribs and aching shoulders very tenderly, ate my supper hungrily, and settled down to my manuscripts. In ten minutes I was nodding.

"Good heavens!" said I, "this will never do! I'll have to get up in the morning and work."

So I bade Mrs. Temple wake me when she got up at five.

"Well," I reflected, as I tumbled into bed, "you can't have everything and a country estate, too. Fancy *me* getting up at five o'clock!"

Chapter IV

I PUMP UP A GHOST

AS A matter of fact, I didn't. I went to sleep again at five, and slept till seven. It's not nearly so easy as it sounds in books to change all your habits of life. But I resolved to try again the next morning, and meanwhile to keep awake that night at all costs. Then, after breakfast, I set out for my farm. Hard Cider would be there with the estimate. The rest of that row of orchard was waiting for me. Mike and Joe would finish harrowing the potato field and begin planting. I almost ran down the road!

What is there about remodelling an old house, renovating an old orchard, planting a fresh-ploughed field, even building a chicken coop, which inspires us to such enthusiasm? I have written a few things of which I am not ashamed, and taken great joy in their creation. But it was not the same joy as that I take in making even one new garden bed, and not in the least comparable to the joy of those first glorious days when my old house was shaping up anew. It has often seemed to me almost biological, this delight in domestic planning both inside and outside of the dwelling—as though it

were foreordained that man should have each his own plot of earth, which calls out a primal and instinctive æstheticism like nothing else, and is coupled with the domestic instinct to reinforce it. I have known men deaf and blind to every other form of beauty who clung with a loyal and redeeming love to the flowers in their dooryard.

As I came into my own dooryard, I found Hard Cider unloading lumber. He nodded briefly, and handed me a dirty slip of paper—his estimate. Evidently he, too, had paternally taken me over, for this estimate included the plumber's bill for a heater, the water connections for house and barn, a boiler on the kitchen range, and the bathroom. The bill would come to $3,000. That far exceeded my own estimate, and I had still the painters to reckon with! However, Hard's bill seemed fair enough, for Bert had told me the price of lumber, and there was a lot of digging to connect with the town main. I nodded "Go ahead," and opened the door. In three minutes he and his assistant were busily at work.

In the woodshed I found Mike cutting up the seed potatoes into baskets.

"Good mornin'," he said. "Joe's got the tooth harrer workin', and we'll be plantin' this afternoon."

I started then toward the orchard, only to meet the boss plumber arriving. With him I went down cellar to decide on the position for the heater. "Of

course you're going to have hot water?" said the boss.

"Am I?" said I. "I loathe radiators. They spoil the rooms. Wouldn't you, as a great concession, let me have old-fashioned hot air?"

"You can have anything you want, of course," the plumber replied, being, like most of his kind, without a sense of humour, "but to get register pipes upstairs in this old house you'll spoil your rooms more than with radiators. We have some very ornamental radiators."

"There ain't no such animal," said I.

But I ended with hot water. There were to be four radiators downstairs and three upstairs, one in the bathroom, one in the hall, and one in a chamber. The other chambers, having fireplaces, I decided needed no further heat, though the plumber was mournfully skeptical. That made seven in all, and did not call for a large heater. After much dickering and argument, the plumber consented to leave the old copper pump at the sink, in addition to the faucets. I refused to let that pump go, with its polished brass knob on the iron handle, even though the sink was to be replaced by a porcelain one. As the bathroom was almost over the kitchen, and as the house already had a good cesspool, by some happy miracle, the work was comparatively simple, and the plumber left to get his men and supplies.

Again I started for the orchard. Already the buds

were swelling on the old trees, and the haze of nascent foliage hung over them. I had four and a half rows to trim, and then the whole orchard to go over with paint pot and gouge and cement. I had never trimmed a tree in my life till the day before, yet I felt that I was doing a better job than Bert had done on his trees, for Bert's idea of pruning was to cut off all the limbs he could reach near the trunk, often leaving a stub four inches long when it didn't happen to be convenient to saw closer. He made his living, and a good one, selling milk and cauliflowers—he had thirty acres down to cauliflowers, and shipped them to New York—but, like so many New England farmers, he couldn't or wouldn't understand the simple science of tree culture. Anybody can learn tree culture with a little application to the right books or models and a little imagination to see into the future. A good tree pruner has to be a bit of an architect. I thought so then in my pride, at any rate, and it turned out I was right. Right or wrong, however, I went at my job that morning with a mighty zest, and soon had a second barrier of dead wood heaped upon the ground.

As I worked, I thought how this orchard must be trimmed and cleaned up first, but how the fine planting weather was upon us, too, and I ought to be getting my garden seeds in, if I was to have any flowers. I thought, also, of all my manuscripts to be read. A nervous fit seized me, and I worked frantically. "How on

earth shall I ever find time for all I've got to do?" I said to myself, sending the saw into a dead limb with a vicious jab. But I soon discovered that nervous haste wasn't helping any. In my excitement, I cleaned off all the suckers on a limb, and suddenly realized that I should have left two or three of the strongest to make new wood, as the limb itself was past bearing. I thought of Mike's reflection, that he kept his thoughts on his gardening. So I calmed down, and gave my whole attention to my work, making a little study of each limb, deciding what I wished to leave for future development, and what would give the best decorative effect to my slope as well. You can really trim an old apple tree into a thing of gnarled power and quaint charm by a little care.

Tap, tap, tap, came the sound of hammers from my house. The plumbers had returned, and I could hear them rattling pipes. The water company was digging for the connections. Now and then a shout from Joe to the horses was wafted down from the plateau. A pair of persistent song sparrows, building in an evergreen by the brook, kept up a steady song. A robin sang in the next tree to me. The sun beat warmly on my neck. And I sawed and pruned, keeping steadily to my job, treating each tree and limb as a separate and important problem, till I heard the hammers cease at noon.

I had almost completed my first row!

As I returned from dinner, Joe was walking the drills in the potato field, dropping the fertilizer, and the bent form of Mike followed immediately behind him, dropping the seed from a basket. Joe walked with a fine, free stride, and dropped the fertilizer from his hand with a perfectly rhythmic gesture. The father's bent back behind him was an added touch from Millet. But the lone pine and the blue mountains gave a bright, sharp quality to the landscape which was quite unlike Millet. The picture held me, however, as do the Frenchman's canvases. Even my knowledge of Mike's comfortable home and happy disposition did not rob it of that subtle pathos of agricultural toil. Why the pathos, I asked myself? Mike is healthy and happy. No toil is more healthful. I'm working as hard as Mike, and having a glorious time! To be sure, I'm working my own land, but Mike, too, has a garden of his own, yet doubtless looks as pathetic in it. I could find no solution, unless it be that instinctive belief of a city-bred civilization that all joys are urban. Just then, however, Mike straightened up with a laugh, and the pathos vanished.

"So the pathos," thought I, as I caught myself instinctively straightening, too, "is a matter of spinal sympathy!"

This was a most comforting reflection, and I hastened to investigate Hard Cider's morning work. The kitchen floor was ready to relay. Over the old planking he had spread tar paper, then carefully adjusted a light, half-

inch framework, and on top of this was laying the new floor.

"Thet'll keep out the cold," he said briefly, carefully lifting the lid of the stove and spitting into the fire pot.

I examined the framework on which he was laying the new floor. It was as carefully jointed as if it were the floor itself.

"Why so much pains with this?" I asked, pointing with my toe.

"Why not?" Hard Cider replied, as the March Hare replied to Alice.

I was braver than Alice. "But it doesn't show," I said.

"Somebody might take the floor up," he retorted, with some scorn.

"Hard Cider, after all, is an artist," I thought. "He has the artistic conscience—and, being a Yankee, he won't admit it."

I went back to my orchard, working with a greater confidence and speed now, born of practice; and I had begun on the second row by five o'clock. Then I walked up to the plateau. Joe was working overtime, covering the drills, while his father was doing the stable work. I staked the three sections of the field containing Early Rose, Dibble's Russet, and Irish Cobbler respectively, and entered in my notebook the date of planting. It occurred to me then and there

to keep a diary of all seeds, soils, fertilizers, and plantings, noting weather conditions and pests during the growing season, and the time, quality, and quantity of harvest. That diary I began the same evening; I have kept it religiously ever since, and I have learned more about agriculture from its pages than from any other book—something I don't say vainly at all, because it is but the careful tabulation of practical experience, and that is any man's best teacher.

I picked up a hoe and helped Joe cover drills for half an hour. Thanks to golf and rowing, my hands were already calloused, or I don't know what would have happened to them in those first days!

Then I walked back to my house. I could not bring myself to leave it. I walked down through the littered orchard to the brook, and planned out a cement dam and a pool. Then I walked back to the south side of the dwelling, and looked out over the slope where my main vegetable farm was to be. The land had been ploughed close up to the house. It would be easy to level it off for a hundred feet or more into a grass terrace, with a rose hedge at the end to shut out the farm, and a sundial in the centre. To the east it would go naturally into an extension of the orchard; to the west it would end at a grape arbour just beyond the farthest woodshed. I would place my garden hotbeds against the sheltered south side of the kitchen, and screen them with a bed of hollyhocks running west from the end of

the main house, which extended in a jog some twelve or fifteen feet beyond the kitchen. Thus one end of my pergola veranda would naturally run off into a hollyhock walk, the other into the grassy slope of the orchard, while directly in front of the glass door would be the lawn, the sundial, and then a white bench against the rambler hedge. I saw it all as I stood there, saw it and thrilled to it as a painter must thrill to a new conception; thrilled, also, at the prospect of achieving it with my own hands; thrilled at the thought of dwelling with it all my days. I must have remained there a long time, lost in reverie, for I was very late to supper, and Mrs. Temple was not so cheerful as her wont.

That night I managed to keep awake till eleven, and got some work done. I also rose at a compromise hour of six in the morning, and worked another hour, almost catching up with what should have been my daily stint. But I realized that hereafter I could not work on the farm all day. I must give up my mornings to my manuscript reading.

"Well," thought I, "I'll do it—as soon as the orchard is finished."

As soon as the orchard was finished! I stood amid the litter I had made on the ground, and reflected. I had completed the preliminary trimming of one row and part of a second. There were still over two rows and a half to do. And the worst trees were in those rows, at that. After they were trimmed, there was all

the litter to clear out, and the stubs to be painted, and cement work to be done.

"Good gracious!" thought I, "if I do all that, when will I plant, when will I make my lawn?"

Were you ever lost in the woods, so that you suddenly felt a mad desire to rush blindly in every direction, helpless, bewildered, with a horrid sensation that your heart has gone down somewhere into your abdomen? That is the way I suddenly felt toward my farm. I couldn't afford to employ more labour. Besides, I didn't want to. I wanted to do the work myself. But there was so much to do!

I stood stock still and pulled myself together. "Rome was not built in a day," I told myself. "You just take out the worst of the dead wood in those remaining trees now, and finish them another season, or else at odd times during the summer."

Then one of those things called a still, small voice whispered in my ear: "But you should never begin a new job till you have finished the old. Hoe out your row, my son!"

I recognized the latter words as the catch phrase of a moral story in an ancient reader used in my boyhood school days. Oh, these blighting dogmas taught us in our youth! I resisted the still, small voice, but I felt secretly ashamed. That day I finished the orchard by merely taking out unsightly dead wood and a few of the worst suckers; so that one half of it looked naked and

one half bearded, even as the half-shaved hunchback in the "Arabian Nights." I knew I was doing right, yet I felt I was doing wrong, and in my heart of hearts I was never quite happy for a year, till I had that orchard finished.

Meanwhile, Hard Cider had finished the kitchen floor and cut out the new door frame into the dining-room, while the plumbers had mounted the boiler by the range and begun on the piping. Mike and Joe had been busy on the slope to the south, ploughing the most distant portion for the fodder crops and harrowing in load after load of old stable manure from the barn. The next day would bring them into the garden area, so I staked out my contemplated sundial lawn, allowing a liberal 250 feet, and ran the line westward till it came a trifle beyond the last woodshed, whence I ran it north to the shed for the grape arbour. West of the arbour, on the half acre of slope remaining before the plateau was reached, I planned to set out a new orchard—some day. That same night I filled out an order for fifty rambler roses! "I'll grow 'em on poles, till I can build the trellises," said I. Then I sat down to my manuscripts.

The next morning I managed to prod myself out of bed at five-thirty, and found that I could do more work before breakfast than in three hours in the evening. I must confess I was a little annoyed at this verification of a hoary superstition. Personally, I like best to work

at night, and some day I shall work at night again. It is a goal to strive for. But you cannot drive your brain at night when you've been driving your body all day. That, alas! is a drawback on farming.

Reaching my farm at eight, I found Joe harrowing in manure on the garden and Mike sowing peas.

"Can I have the horse to-morrow?" said I.

"Yez cannot," said Mike. "Sure, we'll be another day at the least gettin' the garden ready."

"But I want to grade my lawn," I said. "The day after, then?"

"Maybe," said Mike. "Yez must make lawns when there's nothin' else at all to do."

"Yes, sir," I replied, and he grinned.

That sundial lawn had now taken possession of my imagination. My fingers fairly itched to be at it. I lingered fondly on the rough furrowed slope as I crossed to the orchard, and saw a rambler in pink or red glory at each of my stakes, climbing a trellis and making a great, outdoor room for my house. I stepped into the house straightway, and told Hard Cider to order the trellis lumber for me.

Then I went at my orchard. Armed with a gouge, a mallet, a bag of cement, a barrowful of sand, a box for mixing, a trowel, and a pail of carbolic solution, I gouged out a few—only a few—of the worst cavities in the old trunks, washed them, and filled them with cement. It was a slow process, that took me all the

morning, and I fear it was none too neatly done, for I had never worked in cement before. Moreover, I will admit that I got frightened at my inexperience, and confined my experiments to three or four cavities. But it was extraordinarily interesting. I found a certain childish fascination in the similarity of the work to a dentist's filling teeth. If every tree died, I told myself, I would still have been repaid in the fun of doing the job myself. Early in the afternoon I started to paint the scars where limbs had been removed, but changed my mind suddenly, and decided to clean up the litter on the ground first. The orchard looked so disgusting. So for more than three hours I sawed and chopped, chopped and sawed, carted wheelbarrow load after wheelbarrow load of firewood to the shed, and load after load of brush and dead stuff to a heap in the garden. Still the rake brought up more litter from the tangled grass (for the orchard had not been mowed the year before), and still I trundled the barrow back for it.

When six o'clock came I was still carting from the top of the orchard, and for an hour past I had been working with that grim automatism which characterizes the last lap of a two-mile race. There is no joy of creation in clearing up! It is just a grind. And yet it is a part of creation, too, the final stage in the achievement of garden beauty. I wonder if any gardener exists, though, with the imagination so to regard it while he cleans? Certainly I am not the man. I then and

there resolved to finish the job by instalments, from day to day. Perhaps, taken a little at a time, it would not seem so boresome!

The next morning the smoke of my burning brush pile was coming over the hill as I drew near my farm. The harrow was at work in the garden. Hard's hammer was ringing from the chamber over the dining-room, which he was converting into a bathroom so that the plumbers could get to work in it. The old orchard trees held up their cropped and denuded tops with a brave show of buds, and I debated with myself what I should do. "Spray!" I decided. So I got a hoe, and started to scrape the trees mildly on the trunks and large lower limbs, while my lime-sulphur mixture was boiling on the stove. I soon found that here, again, I had tackled a job which would require a day, not an hour, so I gave it up, and put the solution in my spraying barrel, summoned Joe to the pump, and sprayed for scale on the unscraped bark. I was by this time getting used to half measures. You have to, when you try to bring up a farm with limited labour!

The wiseacre has now, of course, foreseen that I killed all the young buds. Alas! I am again compelled to spoil a good story, and confess that I didn't kill any of them. I mixed the lime-sulphur one part to sixty, for I carefully read the warning in my spraying bulletin. I have my doubts whether it was strong enough to kill the scale, certainly not with the bark left on, but at

least it was weak enough not to kill the buds, and it was fun applying it.

"There," I cried, as noon came, "the orchard may rest for the present! Now for the next thing!"

Have you ever watched a small boy picking berries? He never picks a bush clean, but rushes after this or that big cluster of fruit which strikes his eye, covering half an acre of ground while you, perhaps, are stripping a single clump of bushes. And he is usually amazed when your pail fills quicker than his. Alas! I fear I was much like that small boy during my first season on the farm, or at any rate during the first month or two. There was little "efficiency" in my methods—but, oh, much delight!

I fairly gobbled my dinner, and rushed back, a fever of work upon me. Seed beds, that was what I wanted next. As I had planned to put my garden coldframes along the south wall of the kitchen, I decided to make my temporary seed beds there. Mike assented to the plan as a good one, and I had him dump me a load of manure, while I brought earth from the nearest point in the garden, spaded up the soil, mixed in the garden earth and dressing, and then worked and reworked it with a rake, and finally with my hands.

Ah, the joy of working earth with your naked hands, making it ready for planting! The ladies I had seen in their gardens always wore gloves. Even my mother, I recalled, in her little garden, had always worn gloves.

Surely, thought I, they miss something—the cool, moist feel of the loam, the very sensations of the seeds themselves. At four o'clock I had my bed ready, and I got my seed packets, sorted them in a tin tobacco box, and began to sow the seeds. The directions which I read with scrupulous care always said, "press the earth down firmly with a board." I was working with a flat mason's trowel, so I got up and found a board. It wasn't half so easy to work with, but I was taking no chances!

"There must," I grinned, "be some magic efficacy in that board."

The seeds were not my own selection. They had been chosen for me by Professor Grey's assistant. That, I confess, was a cloud on my pleasure. Half the fun in sowing flower seeds comes from your hope of achieving those golden promises held out by the seed catalogues—like a second marriage, alas! too often "the triumph of hope over experience"—or else from your memory of some bright bed of the year before.

But the cloud was a small one, after all. I sat in the afternoon sun, beneath my kitchen windows, opening little packets of annuals with grimy fingers that turned the white papers brown, and gently, lovingly, put the seeds into the ground. I had no beds as yet to transplant them to; very often I didn't know whether they could be transplanted. (As it turned out, I wasted all my poppy seeds.) But I was in no mood to wait. As

each little square was sown, I thrust the packet on a stick for a marker, and hitched along to the next square. Bachelors' buttons, love-in-a-mist, Drummond's phlox, zinnias, asters, stock, annual larkspur, cosmos, mignonette (of course I lost all that later, as well as the poppies), marigolds, nasturtiums, and several more went into the soil. My border seeds, the sweet alyssum and lobelia, I had sense enough not to plant, and I sowed none of the perennials. But what I put in was enough to keep a gardener busy the rest of the summer. Then I got my new watering-pot, filled it at the kitchen sink, and gently watered the hopeful earth.

Mike and Joe were unhitching the horse from the harrow as I finished. The great brown slope of the vegetable garden, lying away from the house toward the ring of southern hills, was ready for planting. There was my farm, thence would come my profits—if profits there should be. But just at that moment the little strip of soaked seed bed behind me was more important. It stood for the colour box with which I was going to paint, for the fragrant pigments out of which I should create about my dwelling a dream of gardens.

"After all," I thought, "a country place is but half realized without its garden, even though it be primarily a farm; and the richness of country living is but half fulfilled unless we become painters with shrub and tree and flower. I cannot draw, nor sing, nor play. Perhaps I cannot even write. But surely I can express my-

self here, about me, in colour and landscape charm, and not be any the worse farmer for that. I have my work; I shall write; I shall be a farmer; I shall be a gardener—an artist in flowers; I shall make my house lovely within; I shall live a rich, full life. Surely I am a happy, a fortunate, man!"

I put the watering-pot back in the shed, crossed the road to the old wooden pump by the barn on a sudden impulse, and pumped water on my hands and head, for I was hot. Mike stood in the barn door and laughed.

"What are yez doin' that for?" he asked.

I stood up and shook the water from my face and hair. "Just to be a kid, I guess," I laughed.

There are some things Mike couldn't understand. Perhaps I did not clearly understand myself. In some dim way an old pump before a barn and the shock of water from its spout on my head was fraught with happy memories and with dreams. The sight of the pump at that moment had waked the echo of their mood.

But as I plodded up the road in the May twilight to supper, one of those memories came back with haunting clearness—a summer day, a long tramp, the tender wistfulness of young love shy at its own too sudden passion, the plunge of cool water from a pump, and then at twilight half-spoken words, and words unspoken, sweeter still!

The amethyst glow went off the hills that ring our valley, and a far blue peak faded into the gathering

dusk. A light shivered off my spirit, too. I felt suddenly cold, and the cheery face of Mrs. Temple was the face of a stranger. I felt unutterably lonely and depressed. My farm was dust and ashes. That evening I savagely turned down a manuscript by a rather well-known author, and went to bed without confessing what was the matter with me. The matter was, I had pumped up a ghost.

Chapter V

I AM HUMBLED BY A DRAG SCRAPER

ONE of the advantages of being a bachelor when you are building or restoring a house is that you can spend most of your time in the garden. I am by nature a trusting soul anyway (which no woman and possibly no wise man ever is where carpenters, builders, and plumbers are concerned), and I trusted Hard Cider implicitly. He told me the plumbers were "doin' all right," and I believed him. That he himself was doing all right my own eyes told me, for he had by now reached the south rooms, removed the dividing partition, revealing the old, hand-hewn oak beam at the top, and was cutting a double door out in the centre on either side of the great oak upright, toward my future sundial lawn. I stood in this new door, looking back at my twin fireplaces, with their plain-panelled old mantels.

"Mr. Howard," said I, "those mantels are about as plain as you could make 'em, and yet they are very handsome, somehow, dingy as they are."

"It's the lines," said Hard Cider. "Jest the right lines. Lower 'em six inches, and whar'd they be?"

"Could you build me a bookcase, against the wall, just like them, from one to the other and bring it out at right angles five feet into the room from the centre, making it the back of a double settle?" I asked.

"I'm a carpenter," Hard replied laconically.

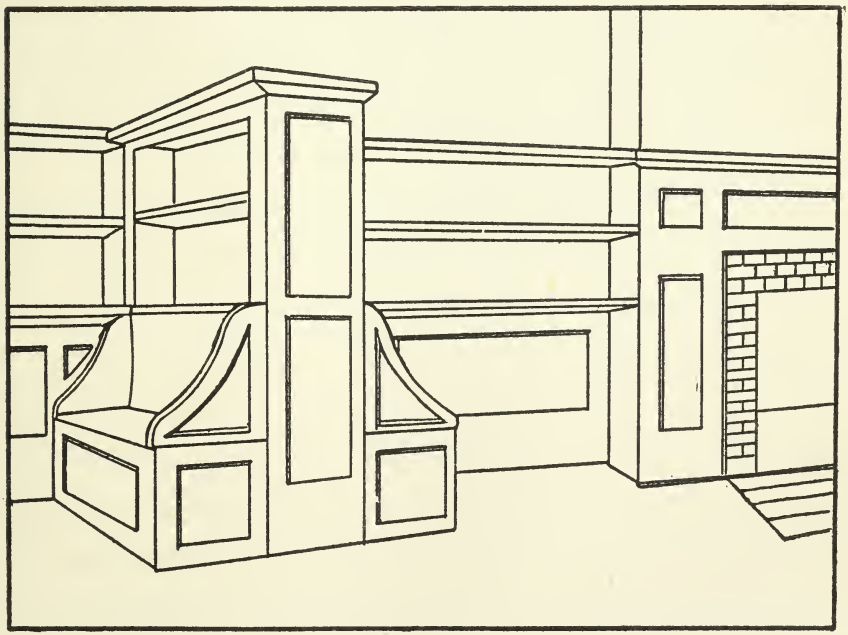
"Could you draw me what it would look like first?"

"I ain't said I wuz an artist," he answered. "Draw it yerself."

I took his proffered pencil, and sketched what I wanted on a clean board.

"Yer got too much curve on the base and arms o' them settles," he said judicially. "Ain't no curves in your mantels. You want 'em square, with a panel like them over your fireplaces."

He took the pencil away from me, and made a quick,



neat, accurate sketch of just what I instantly saw I did want.

I shrugged my shoulders. "Go ahead!" said I. "What did you ask me to draw it for in the first place?"

"Folks likes to think they hev their own idees," he answered.

I turned away, through the new south door, into the May sunshine. The pergola was not commenced. In fact, I had decided not to build it till the following spring. Those beastly painters whom I had forgotten were going to eat up too much of my slender capital. Before me stretched the 250 feet of ploughed slope which was to be my sundial lawn. At the end of it was my line of stakes where the ramblers were to climb. Beyond that was the vegetable garden, newly harrowed and fertilized, where Mike and Joe were busily working, the one planting peas, the other setting out a row of beets. The horse was not in evidence. I could have him at last, to make my lawn! I ran around the house to the stable, clumsily put on his harness, for I was not used to horses, led him to the shed where my tools were stored, hitched him to my new drag scraper, and drove him to the slope.

As I have said, the ground here sloped down eastward toward the brook, and if I was to have a level lawn south of my house, I should have to remove at least two feet of soil from the western end and deposit it on the eastern end. I wisely decided to start close to

the house. Hauling at the handles of the heavy scraper and yelling "Back up, there!" at the horse, I got the steel scoop into the ground at the line of my proposed grape arbour, tipped down the blade, and cried, "Gid-dup!" I hung to the reins as best I could, twisting them about my wrist, and the horse started obediently forward. The scoop did its work very nicely. In fact, it was quite full after we had gone six feet, and I had only to let the horse drag it the remaining ninety-four feet of the proposed width of the lawn, and empty it. Then I went back, and repeated the process. After five repetitions of the same process, the perspicacious reader will have reckoned that I had shaved off something less than half the width of my lawn, on one furrow, and was still a long, long way from being down to the required depth of two feet at the higher end. My arms already ached. As the scraper covered a furrow but two feet wide, that meant 125 furrows to scrape my entire lawn as planned, and at least twenty trips to the furrow. I did some rapid multiplication as I paused to wipe my brow. "Twenty times 125 is 2,500," thought I. I dropped the reins and moved toward my stakes. I saw that Joe and Mike were looking at me.

"I think," said I, with some dignity, as I began to pull the stakes up, "that this lawn will look better square. As it's a hundred feet broad, a hundred feet will be far enough to extend it from the house."

"Sure," said Mike, "the big road scraper 'll be over here to-morrow, scrapin' the road, and it do be easier an' quicker to borry that."

In some ways, I consider this remark of Mike's, under the circumstances, one of the most gentlemanly I ever heard! And I jumped at his suggestion.

"Mike," said I, "I'll admit this job is bigger than I thought. How can I borrow the road scraper?"

"Sure, ain't me frind Dan Morrissy one o' the selictmen?" said Mike, "and ain't he the road boss, and ain't he willin' to earn an extra penny for—for the town?"

"H'm," said I; "for the town! Well, I've got to have this lawn! You get your friend Dan in the morning. Just the same, I don't love the town so much that I want a 250-foot lawn."

I took my line of stakes back 150 feet, and replanted them. That gave me a more intimate lawn, like a large outdoor south room, I thought. It also increased my vegetable garden acreage. I returned to the scraper and the patient horse with a new humbleness, a new realization of what one man cannot do in a day. That, perhaps, is one of the first and most important lessons of farming and gardening. Once you have learned it, you are either discouraged or fired anew with the persistence of patience. I was not discouraged. Besides, I had Mike's friend Dan, the selectman, to fall back on! It is always well to be friends with Tammany Hall. First, I decided not to grade even my smaller lawn to a

dead level, but merely to smooth it off, letting that process counteract the slope as much as it would. Then I started to scoop again, bringing down the soil from the higher western side directly to the south face of my house and dumping it there, to be packed into a terrace which next season should be the floor of my pergola.

Did you ever try to handle a drag scraper and drive the horse at the same time, dear reader? It requires more muscle and as much patience as golf. Joe offered to come and drive for me, but I preferred him to plant, and kept on by myself. It is amazing how much dirt you can dump in one place without increasing the pile perceptibly. The only thing more amazing is the amount of dirt you can take out of one place without perceptibly increasing the depth of your hole. I ran the scoop along the edge of my proposed grape arbour time after time, dumping the contents in front of my new south door, but still that first furrow didn't sink more than six inches, and still the sills of my house rose above the piles. Noon came and found me with aching arms and strained shoulder sockets. I had brought some lunch, to save the walk back to Mrs. Temple's, and I took it into my big south room to eat it. Hard was in there eating his. The plumbers were eating theirs in the new kitchen, already completed

Hard, I found, had begun the bookcase, which was just the height of the mantels. He had been preparing the top moulding with his universal plane when noon

came, and the sweet shavings lay curled on the floor. I scuffed my feet in them, and even hung one from my ear, as children do, while Hard Cider regarded me scornfully.

"I'm going to have great times in this room!" I exclaimed. "Books between the fireplaces, books along the walls, just a few pictures, including my Hiroshiges, over the mantels, my desk by the west window, and out there the green garden! A man ought to write something pretty good in this room, eh?"

Hard looked at me with narrowed eyes. "I don't know nothin' about writin'," he said, "but it 'pears to me a feller could write most anywhar pervided he had somethin' ter say."

Whereupon Hard concluded by biting into a large piece of prune pie.

The Yankee temperament is occasionally depressing! I went outdoors again, eating my doughnuts as I walked, and strolled into the vegetable garden to survey the staked rows which denoted beets and peas. Then I went down the slope into my little stand of pines, into the cool hush of them, and unconsciously my brain relaxed in the bath of their peace, and for ten minutes I lay on the needles, neither asleep nor awake, just blissfully vacant. Then I returned to my scooping, marvellously rested.

I scooped till three o'clock, led the horse back to the barn, got a shovel and rake, and began to spread my

terrace. As this south end of my house (and accordingly my big south room) was but thirty-three feet long, the task was not very severe, particularly as the upper, or western, end, did not require much grading. I built the terrace out about twelve feet from the wall, stamped up and down on it to pack it, and raked it smooth. I realized that it would settle, of course, and I should need more earth yet upon it before it was sown down to grass, or, if I could afford it, bricked; but in order to hold the bank, I got some grass seed and planted the edge, and also got a couple of planks to stretch from the south door across the terrace and down to the lawn, until I could build my proposed brick path and steps. It was six o'clock when I had finished. Palm-sore and weary, I drank a great tin dipperful of water from my copper pump in the kitchen, took a last look at Hard's bookcase, which had already been built out the required five feet into the room along the line of the old partition, fourteen inches wide to hold books on both sides, tried the doors to see that they were locked, and tramped up the dusty road to supper.

Mrs. Temple was beaming when I came down from my bath.

"Why so happy?" said I.

"Well," said she, "in the first place, I've got you the housekeeper I want."

"By which I infer that she's the one *I* want, too?" I asked.

"Of course," said Mrs. Temple, on whom irony had no effect. "She's Mrs. Pillig, from Slab City, and she's an artist in pies."

"Go on; you interest me strangely!" I cried. "Is her husband dead, and has she got a small boy?" (Here I winked at Bert.)

"Pillig ain't dead, worse luck," said Mrs. Temple, "but he's whar he won't trouble you. I guess Peter won't trouble you none, neither. He's a nice boy, and he'll be awful handy round the place."

"Peter Pillig!" I exclaimed. "There ain't no such animal! If there is, Dickens was his grandfather. How old is Peter?"

"Peter's eleven," Mrs. Bert replied. "He's real nice and bright. His mother's brought him up fine. Anyhow, she was a Corliss."

"But, eugenically speaking, Peter may have a predisposition to follow in father's footsteps, which I infer led toward the little green swinging doors," I protested.

"Speakin' U. S. A., tommyrot!" said Mrs. Temple. "Anyhow, it's the door o' the drugstore in this town. They sell more'n sody water down to Danforth's."

"What am I to pay the author of Peter and the pies?" I asked.

"Well, seein's how you keep Peter, as it were, and Mrs. Pillig calc'lates she can rent her house up to Slab City, she's goin' to come to you for $20 a month. She's

wuth it, too. You'll have the best kept and cleanest house in Bentford."

I rose from the table solemnly. "Mrs. Temple," said I, "I accept Mrs. Pillig, Peter, and the pies at these terms, but only on one condition: *She is never to clean my study!*"

"Why?" asked Mrs. Temple.

"Because," said I, "you can never tell where an orderly woman will put things."

Bert chuckled as he filled his pipe. Mrs. Temple grinned herself. I was about to make a triumphant exit, when these words from Mrs. Temple's lips arrested me:

"Bert," she said, "did you clean the buggy to-day? You know you gotter go over ter the deepot to-morrow an' git that boarder."

"That *what?*" I cried.

Mrs. Bert's eyes half closed with a purely feminine delight. "Oh, ain't I told you?" she said innocently. "We're goin' ter hev another boarder, a young lady. From Noo York, too. Her health's broke down, she says, only that's not the way she said it, and somehow she heard of us. We ain't never taken many boarders, but I guess our name's in that old railroad advertisin' book. I wouldn't hev took her, only I thought maybe you wuz kind o' lonesome here with jest us."

"Mrs. Temple," said I, "your solicitude quite overwhelms me. Comfort me with petticoats! Good Lord!

And an anæmic, too! I'll bet she has nerves! When can Mrs. Pillig come to me, woman?"

Mrs. Bert's eyes closed still farther. "Oh, your house ain't near ready yet," she said. "Why, the painters ain't even began."

I fled to my chamber, and hauled forth a manuscript. A female boarder! No doubt she'd expect me to shave every day and change my working clothes for the noon-day dinner! Heavens! probably she'd come down and advise me how to lay out my garden! So far, I had been blissfully free from advice. I had gone to the village just once—to open my account at the bank. I had not met a soul in the town. One or two of the early arrivals on the estates had driven by in their cars and stared curiously, but I had ignored them. I didn't want advice. I was having fun in my own way.

"Hang Mrs. Temple!" I muttered, reading a whole paragraph of manuscript without taking in a word of it. In fact, I gave up all attempt to work, and crossly and wearily went to bed, where I lay on one of my strained shoulders and dreamed that a sick female with spectacles was hauling at my arm and begging me to come and rescue her sciatic nerve, which had fallen into my not-yet-built garden pool and was being swallowed by a gold fish.

Chapter VI

THE HERMIT SINGS AT TWILIGHT

THE next morning I demanded that Mrs. Temple again put me up some lunch. "For," said I, "I'm going to postpone meeting this broken-down wreck of a perhaps once proud female as long as possible."

"Maybe when you see her drive by you'll be sorry," Mrs. Bert smiled.

"I shall be working on the south side of the house," I retorted.

I had not been long at my place, indeed, I had scarcely finished watering my seed bed and carting out my daily stint of two barrow loads of slash from the orchard, when I heard the road scraper rattling over the bridge by the brook. Mike came from the vegetable garden and met his "frind Morrissy," to whom I was ceremoniously presented.

The scraper was a large affair with flat-tired iron wheels and a blade eight feet long. It was drawn by four horses, and Mr. Morrissy himself was driving, while a younger man manipulated the levers. We drove in behind the woodshed to the proposed lawn, I explained what I wanted done, and the scraper went to work, with

me trotting anxiously alongside, quite useless but convinced that I was helping, like Marceline at the Hippodrome. The way that eight-foot blade, with four horses hauling it, peeled off the old furrows and brought the top soil down from the high side to the low made my poor efforts with the scoop look puny enough. After a few trips it began to look as if my lawn could be fairly level after all. Where I had worked an hour to lower the ground six inches, the scraper accomplished the same result in five minutes and on four times as wide a strip. I soon saw, too, that Mike and Joe were useless in the garden, so long as "frind Morrissy" and his helper were here on the lawn, so I set them to spreading the loose dirt at the lower end, as fast as the scraper brought it down, taking a hand myself. The lawn was shaping up so fast that I began once more to grow expansive.

"It really won't be square," thought I, "because my pergola will cut off twelve feet of the length, and if I have flower beds by the roses, they'll cut off some more. I guess those roses ought to be 112 feet from the house."

I threw down my shovel, went over to the row of stakes, and moved them south again, twenty-five feet, having added thirteen feet as I walked; then I called out to "frind Morrissy" to bring his scraper.

"Sure," said Mike, "you'll get it right yet. But I was goin' to put me cauliflowers there."

The scraper went at the new twenty-five foot strip, and

in an hour that, too, was down eight inches at the west end and up as much at the east. The lawn still sloped, and though an afternoon with the scraper could probably have put it nearly level, and I was tempted to have it done, Mike pointed out that we were already getting perilously close to the subsoil, and if we went deeper we'd get into tough sledding, and I'd end, besides, by getting a surface which wouldn't grow grass. So I took his advice, paid "frind Morrissy"—for the town!—as the far-off noon whistle at Slab City blew, and took my lunch down to the brook while the scraper rattled off down the road.

The brook reminded me of the pool I was going to build, and the pool of my dream, and my dream of the new boarder, and then with the patness of a "well-made" play the boarder herself entered, as it were. That is, I heard the buggy coming, and the voice of Bert. I lay down flat behind the tall weeds and grasses, and remained hidden till the buggy had passed.

"Confounded petticoats!" thought I. "Well, if she tries to advise me, I'll snub her so she won't try a second time!"

Then I finished my lunch, and lay for a quarter of an hour lazily regarding the sky, a great blue sky with cloud ships floating at anchor in its depths, while the indescribable fragrance of May in moist places filled my nostrils and a song sparrow practised in the alders. As I got up to return to my work, I saw suddenly that the

old apple trees in my orchard were showing pink—just a frail hint of it in the veil of young green. A great cumulus cloud piled up like a Himalayan peak in the west beyond my mouse-gray dwelling. To the left, the new lawn was shiny brown, and as I climbed the slopes the smell of it came to me. Out still farther to the left my land was already staked in rows of packed earth, neatly. The scene was beautiful to my eyes, and the imagined beauty of to-morrow made me almost run through the orchard to leave my lunch basket in the kitchen and get my tools for the afternoon's work.

I had, unfortunately, no roller, but I found in the shed an old piece of tattered carpet, which I tacked on a ten-foot beam, tied a rope to each end, united the two ropes around a stick for a handle, and dragged this improvised smoother back and forth over my lawn, as I had seen the keepers of the dirt tennis courts at college do. It was really surprising how well this smoothed the surface, especially at the lower end where the dirt was loose. It had much less effect on the ground where the scraper had taken off the top soil. After the lawn looked tolerably level to the eye, I brought three loads of manure from the barn, scattered them lightly, and went over the surface with a light tooth harrow. I saw I was not going to get the lawn done that afternoon, for it would have to be "rolled" again. I further realized, as the horse sank into the loose soil at the lower side,

that I should have to wait till a rain had settled the earth before I resmoothed it, and could sow my grass seed. At five o'clock, as Joe was leaving the garden, and Mike had gone to the barn to milk the cows, I, too, put up my tools, resolved to enjoy an hour's loaf—my first since I bought the farm!

I scrubbed my hands and face at the kitchen sink in a tin basin which recalled my childhood, took a long draught from the tin dipper, filled my pipe, and strolled down through the budding orchard toward the brook. The song sparrow was still singing. The cloud ships were still riding at anchor. Even with my pipe in my mouth I could smell the odour of moist places in May. Walking beside the brook, I suddenly found the green spears of an iris plant amid the grasses. A few steps farther on, under the maples, the ground was blue and white with violets and anemones. Then the brook entered the pines, lisping a secret as it went, and I followed it into their cool hush.

I had gone scarcely six paces when I heard the crackle of footsteps on dead twigs somewhere ahead of me, and a moment later the vague form of a woman was visible making her way amid the impeding dead branches. I stood still. She did not see me till she was close up. Then she gave a slight start and said, "I beg your pardon. I trust I am not trespassing."

I looked at her, while my pipe bowl was hot in my calloused hand. She was scarce more than a girl, I

fancied, pale and unmistakably not of this country world. I cannot say how she was dressed, save that she wore no hat and looked white and cool. But I saw that she had very blue eyes on each side of a decidedly tilted nose, and these eyes were unmistakably the kind which twinkle.

"Trespassing is a relative term," said I, after this, I fear, rather rudely prolonged scrutiny.

"You talk like 'Hill's Rhetoric,'" she smiled, with a quick glance at the incongruity of my clothes.

"Naturally," I replied. "It was the text-book I formerly used with my classes."

There was a little upward gurgle of laughter from the girl. "Clearness, force, and elegance, wasn't that the great triumvirate?" she said.

"Something like that, I believe," said I. "I am trying to forget."

"And are these pines yours to forget in? It should be easy. I was walking out there in the road, and I spied the brook over the wall and climbed through the briers to walk beside it, because it was trying so hard to talk to me. That was wrong of me, perhaps, but I never could resist a brook—nor pine trees. They are such nice old men."

"Why, then," I asked, "are the little virgin birches always running away from them?"

Her eyes contracted a second, and then twinkled. "The birches *plague* them," she replied.

"How do they plague them?" I demanded.

"Pull their pine needles when they are asleep, of course," she answered. "Thank you for letting me walk here."

"Not at all," said I, "it is always a pleasure to entertain a true naturalist."

She smiled, and made to pass on. I stood a little aside, in silence. And in that moment of silence suddenly, from near at hand, from somewhere in these very pines, there rang out the golden throb of a hermit thrush so close that the grace notes of his song were audible, cool and liquid and lovely. The suddenness, the nearness, the wildness of this song made it indescribably thrilling, and the girl and I both stood rigid, breathless, peering into the gloom of the pines. Again the call rang out, but a little farther away this time, more plaintive, more fairylike with distance. She took a step as if to follow, and instinctively I put out my hand, grasping her arm to restrain her. So we stood and waited, while from farther still, evidently from the tamaracks in the corner of my lot, came the elfin clarion. The singer was a good one; his attack was flawless, and he scattered his triplets with Mozartian ease and precision. Still we waited, in silence, but he did not sing again. Then in a kind of wonder the girl turned her face to mine, and in a kind of wonder I realized that I was still holding her arm. She appeared as unconscious of it as I, till I let my hand fall. Then she coloured a little,

smiled a little, and said, "What was it? I never heard anything so beautiful."

"A hermit thrush," I answered. "Thoreau once described his song as 'cool bars of melody from the everlasting morning or evening.' I think that expresses it as well as words can."

"I have always wanted to hear a hermit," she said wistfully. "And, oh, it is lovelier than I dreamed! I am going now before I get too jealous of you for having one all your own."

"Don't go!" I said impulsively. "The hermit has never sung for me. That song must have been in your honour."

The moment when I stood holding her arm, the moment when she had turned her wondering, eager face to mine, had been very pleasant. It was dusk now in the pines, and, looking westward, the low sun was making daggers of light between the trees. My ghost that I had brought up from the pump suddenly walked again, but walked in flesh and blood, with blue eyes and tilted nose. I was undeniably affected. My voice must have betrayed it as I repeated, "Don't go!"

"But I fear it is time for my supper," she said, with a little nervous laugh. "The thrush has evidently gone for his."

"Birds eat early," said I. "They have to, because they get up so early, after that worm."

Her laugh was once more an up-gushing gurgle. The

tenseness was broken. I found myself walking by her side through the maples, and pointing out my house.

She clapped her hands ecstatically. "Oh," she cried, "they made the front door out of a highboy! How jolly! Is it as nice inside?"

"It's going to be nicer," said I. "Come and see."

"I'll peep through the windows," she smiled.

I led her to my new south door, proudly showing my new lawn and the terrace, and telling her where the roses were to be, and the sundial, and dilating on the work my own hands had done. With a silly, boyish enthusiasm, I even displayed the callouses and invited her to feel of them, which she did as one humours a child, while I thrilled quite unchildishly at the touch of her finger tips. Then we peeped through the glass doors. The low sun was streaming in through the west window and disclosed the old oak beam across the ceiling. Hard Cider had erected the frame of the bookcase and double settle, which would perfectly match the mantels as soon as the molding was on. One side of the settle faced toward one smoky old fireplace, the other toward the second.

"Two fireplaces! What luxury!" she exclaimed.

"You see," said I, "when I get tired of reading philosophy at the east fireplace, I'll just come around the corner and read 'Alice in Wonderland' at the west chimney nook."

"Double fireplaces—twin fireplaces—twin fires!

That's it, Twin Fires! That ought to be the name of your house."

"You're right!" I cried, delighted. "I've never been able to think of a name. That's the inevitable one—that's Flaubert's one right word. You must come to my christening party and break a bottle of wine on the hearth."

She smiled wistfully, as she turned away from the window. "I must surely go to supper," she said. "Good-bye, and thank you for your wonderful concert."

We walked to the road, but to my surprise she did not turn toward the village but toward Bert's. A sudden light came.

"Are you the broken-down boarder?" I cried.

The gurgle welled up, and the blue eyes twinkled, but she made no reply.

"Just for that," said I, "I won't carry back Mrs. Bert's basket."

As we entered the Temple's yard, Mrs. Bert stood in the kitchen door.

"Well, you two seem to have got acquainted," she remarked in a matter-of-fact tone. "Miss Goodwin, this is Mr. Upton I told you about. Mr. Upton, this is Miss Goodwin I told you about."

"Mrs. Temple," said I, "you are another. You didn't tell me."

"Young man," she retorted, "where's my basket?"

"I left it behind—on purpose," said I.

"Then you'll hev ter come home to yer dinner to-morrow," she said.

"Well, I'm willing," I answered.

"I guess you be," said she.

At supper she returned to the theme, which appeared to amuse her endlessly. "Miss Goodwin," she said, "I want ter warn you thet Mr. Upton's terrible afraid somebody's goin' ter advise him how ter build his garden. He's a regular man."

I replied quickly: "Your warning is too late," said I; "Miss Goodwin has already begun by naming my place."

"You can change the name, you know," the girl smiled.

"How can I?" I answered, with great sternness. "It's the right one."

Whereupon I went up to my work, and listened to the sounds of soft singing in the room across the hall.

Chapter VII

THE GHOST OF ROME IN ROSES

"STELLA GOODWIN." "It's rather a pretty name," I thought, as I read it on the flyleaf of a volume she had left in Mrs. Bert's sitting-room. The volume itself amused me—Chamberlain's "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century." Fancy coming to the country for a rest, and reading Chamberlain, most restless because most provocative of books! I was waiting for breakfast, impatiently, having been at work on my manuscripts since five. Mrs. Bert was in the kitchen; Bert was at the barn. The hour was seven-thirty. I was idly turning the leaves of Chamberlain when there was a rustle on the stairs, and Miss Stella Goodwin entered with a cheerful "Good morning."

"See here," said I, "what are you doing with this book, if you are off for a rest? This is no book for a nervous wreck to be reading."

"Who said I was a nervous wreck?" she answered. "I'm just tired, that's all. I guess it's really spring fever. I saw a spear of real grass in Central Park, and ran away."

"From what?" I asked.

"From the dictionary," she replied.

"The *which?*" said I.

"The dictionary. Would you like me to sing you a song of the things that begin with 'hy'?"

She laughed again, and began to chant in burlesque Gregorian, "Hyopotamus, hyoscapular, hyoscine, Hyoscyameæ, hyoscyamine, Hyoscyamus——"

"Stop!" I cried. "You will have me hypnotized. See, I'm on the 'hy's' myself! Please explain—not sing."

"Well," she laughed, "you see it's this way. I have to eat, drink, and try to be merry, or to-morrow I die, so to postpone to-morrow I am working on a new dictionary. *Somebody* has to work on dictionaries, you know, and justify the pronunciation of America to man. I'm sort of learned, in a mild, harmless, anti-militant way. It isn't fair to keep the truth from you—*I have a degree in philology!* My doctor's thesis was published by the press of my kind University, at $1.50 per copy, of which as many as seventeen were sold, and I'm still paying up the money I borrowed while preparing it. I stood the dictionary pretty well down to the 'hy's,' and then one day something snapped inside of me, and I began to cry. That wouldn't have been so bad, if I hadn't made the mistake of crying on a sheet of manuscript by a learned professor, about Hyoscyamus (which is a genus of dicotyledonous gamopetalous plants), and the ink ran. Then I knew I should have to take a rest in the

cause of English, pure and well defined. So here I am. The doctor tells me I must live out of doors and saw wood."

"Madam," I cried, "God has sent you! I shall get my orchard cleaned up at last!"

"Breakfast!" called Mrs. Bert.

"Miss Goodwin," I announced at that meal, "is going to saw up the dead wood in my orchard this morning."

"No, she ain't. The idee!" cried Mrs. Bert. "She's jest goin' ter rest up for the next four weeks, an' grow fat."

"You are both wrong," laughed the young lady. "I'm not going to begin on Mr. Upton's wood pile this morning, but I expect to finish it before I go away."

"If thet's how you feel, *I* got a wood pile," said Bert.

She refused to come down to Twin Fires with me that morning, so I toiled alone, getting out more of the brush from the orchard—all of the small stuff, in fact, which wasn't fit to save for fuel. In the afternoon she consented to come. As I looked at her hands and then at mine, I realized how pale she was.

"It's wrong for anybody to be so pale as that," I thought, "to *have* to be so pale as that!"

I was beginning to pity her.

When we reached the farm, I took her around under the kitchen window and showed her my seed beds, where the asters were already growing madly, some

other varieties were up, and the weeds were busy, too; but in the present uncertainty of my horticultural knowledge I didn't dare pull up anything. I hadn't realized till that moment that half the fun of having a new place is showing it to somebody else and telling how grand it is going to be.

"And where are you going to put these babies when you set them out?" she asked.

"That's just the point," I cried. "I don't know. I want you to help me."

"After Mrs. Bert's warning, I shouldn't dare advise you," she smiled.

"Well, let's ask Hiroshige," said I. "Come on."

"Is he your gardener? The name sounds quite un-Hibernian."

I scorned a reply, and we went around to the shed where all my belongings were stored, still unpacked. I got a hammer and opened the box containing pictures, drawing forth my two precious Japanese prints. Then I led Miss Goodwin through the kitchen in spite of her protests of propriety, through the fragrance of new flooring, into the big south room, where Hard had nearly completed his main work and was getting in the new door frames while his assistants were patching up the floor. She sat down on the new settle, while I climbed on a box and hung the pictures, one over each mantel. Instantly the room assumed to my imagination something of its coming charm. Those two spots

of colour against the dingy wood panels dressed up the desolation wonderfully. I hastily kicked some shavings and chips into the fireplaces and applied a match.

"The first fires on the twin hearths!" I cried. "In your honour!"

The girl smiled into my face, and did not joke. "That is very nice," she said. Then she rose and put out her hand. "Let me wish Twin Fires always plenty of wood and the happiness which goes with it."

We shook hands, while the fire crackled, and already the spot seemed to me like home. Then she looked up at the prints. "Now," she cried, "how is honourable Hiroshige going to advise you? Here is a blue canal and a lavender sky in the west, and bright scarlet temple doors—and all the rest snow. Lavender and bright scarlet is rather a daring colour scheme, isn't it?"

"Not if it's the right scarlet," I replied. "But it's not the colour I'm going to copy. Neither is it the moon bridges in this other temple garden. It's the simplicity. Out here south of this room is my lawn and garden. Now I want it to be a real garden, but I don't want it to dwarf the landscape. I don't want it to look as if I'd bought a half acre of Italy and deposited it in the middle of Massachusetts, either. I've never seen a picture of a real Japanese garden yet that didn't look as much like a natural Japanese landscape as a garden. I want my garden to be an extension of my

south room which will somehow frame the real landscape beyond."

We went through the glass door, and I showed her where the grape arbour was to be, at the western side of the lawn, and how a lane of hollyhocks would lead to it from the pergola end, screening the kitchen windows and the yet-to-be-built hotbeds.

"Now," said I, "I'm going to build a rambler rose trellis along the south; there's your red against the lavender of the far hills at sunset! But how shall the trellis be designed, and where shall the sundial be, and where the flower beds?"

The girl clapped her hands. "Oh, the fun of planning it all out from the beginning!" she cried. "My, but I envy you."

"Please don't envy; advise," said I.

"Oh, I can't. I don't know anything about gardens."

"But you know what you like! People always say that when they are ignorant, don't they?"

"Don't be nasty," she replied, running down the plank from the terrace to the lawn, and walking out to the centre. "I'd have the sundial right in the middle, where it gets all the sun," she said, "because it seems to me a dial ought to be in the natural focus point of the light. Then I'd ring it with flowers, some low, a few fairly tall, all bright colours, or maybe white, and the beds not too regular. Then, right in line with the door, I'd have an arch in the trellis so you could see through

into the farm. Oh, I know! I'd have the trellis all arches, with a bigger one in the centre, and it would look like a Roman aqueduct of roses!"

"A Roman aqueduct of roses," I repeated, my imagination fired by the picture, "walking across the end of my green lawn, with the farm and the far hills glimpsed beneath! 'Rome's ghost since her decease.' Miss Goodwin, you are a wonder! But can you build it?"

"No," she sighed, "I can only give you the derivation of 'aqueduct' and 'rose'."

"Come," said I, "we will consult Hard Cider."

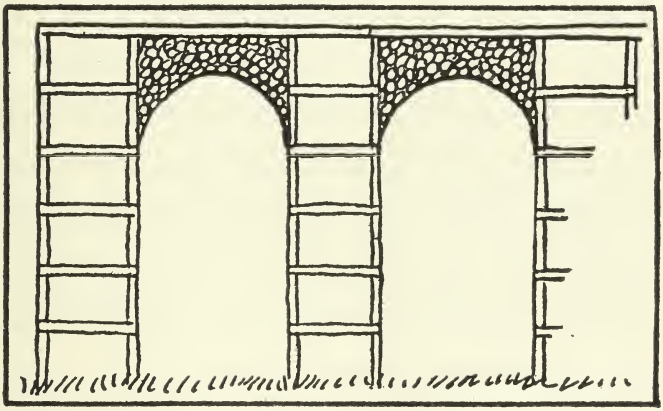
"Heavens!" she laughed. "Is that anything like Dutch courage?"

Hard grunted, and came with us to the line of stakes where the rose trellis was to be. I sketched roughly the idea I wanted—a reproduction in simple trellis work, as it were, of High Bridge, New York.

Hard pondered a moment, and then departed for the shed. He returned with several pieces of trellis lumber, a spade, some tools, a small roll of chicken wire, and a step-ladder, all on a wheelbarrow. At his direction, I dug a post-hole at the extreme east end of the lawn, another two feet away, a third four feet beyond that, and a fourth again two feet to the west. Hard then mounted the 3 x 3 chestnut joists, levelled them as I set them, and connected the tops, leaving a space for the next connection on the final post to the west.

"But where is the arch?" I cried.

Hard climbed down from the wheelbarrow in silence, cut off something over four feet from the three-foot wide chicken wire, and then cut a circumference into this wire which, in the centre, came within a foot of the top. He twisted the loose ends back and tacked the flat arch thus made to the top and inner posts of the trellis. Then he connected the two posts on each side with stripping. Thus I had the first arch of my aqueduct, nine feet high, with two-foot piers of trellis work and a four-foot arch with eight feet clear space under the centre.



"It ain't pretty," said Hard, "but when it's painted green and covered with vines it won't show. Guess most of your roses will bloom on the south side of it, though, away from the house."

My face fell. "Golly, I hadn't thought of that!" said I.

"Oh, they'll peep over and all around it," said Miss Goodwin cheerfully.

"What could I have done else?" said I.

"Nothin', 'cept turned your house around," Hard replied. "You can buy wire arches so's you could plant your roses east and west, but that wouldn't give you no level top like a bridge. You could set those boughten arches on the south side of this trellis, though, so's you'd get the effect of something solid, lookin' through, without losin' your top."

"Guess I'll get you paid first," I laughed, as Hard went back to his work.

"And now," I added to the girl at my side, "shall we see if *we* can build the next arch?"

Again she clapped her hands delightedly, and ran with me around the house for the tools and lumber.

I let her dig the first post-hole, though it was evident that the effort tired her, and then I took the spade away, while she marked off the trellis strips into the proper lengths, and sawed them up, placing each strip across the wheelbarrow and holding it in place first with a hand which looked quite inadequate even for that small task, and, when the hand failed, with her foot.

She laughed as she put her foot on the wheelbarrow, hitching her skirt up where it bound her knee. "The new skirts weren't made for carpenters," she said, as she jabbed away with the saw. I darted a glance at the display of trim ankles, and resumed my digging in the post-holes. This was a new and disturbing distraction in agricultural toil!

The post-holes were soon dug, and while I held the posts, she adjusted the level against them, our hands and faces close together, and we both kicked the dirt in with our feet. Then I climbed on the step-ladder and levelled the top piece, which I nailed down. Then, while I was cutting a semicircle out of the wire, for the arch, she nailed the trellis strips across the piers, grasping the hammer halfway up to the head, and frowning earnestly as she tapped with little, short, jablike blows. She was so intent on this task that I laughed aloud.

"What are you laughing at?" said she.

"You," said I. "You drive a nail as if it were an abstruse problem in differential calculus."

"It is, for me," she answered, quite soberly. "I don't suppose I've driven a dozen nails in my life—only tacks in the plaster to hang pictures on. And it's very important to drive them right, because this is a rose trellis."

"When I first came here," said I, "I was pretty clumsy with my hands, too. I'd lost my technique, as you might say. I remember one afternoon when I was trimming the orchard that I didn't think a single thought beyond the immediate problem each branch presented. And yet it was immensely stimulating. Personally, I believe that the educational value of manual dexterity has only begun to be appreciated."

Miss Goodwin marked off the place for the next strip,

and started nailing. At the last blow she relaxed her frown.

"Maybe," she said. "No, probably. But the manual work, it seems to me, has got to be connected up in some way with—well, with higher things. I can't think of a word to fit, because my head is so full of the 'hy' group. You, for instance, were sawing your *own* orchard, and you were working for better fruit, and more beautiful trees, and a lovely home. You saw the work in its higher relations, its relations to the beauty of living."

"And your nails?" I asked.

"I see the aqueduct of roses," she smiled.

"You will see them, I trust," said I. "You *shall* see them. You must stay till they bloom."

Her brow suddenly clouded, and she shook her head. "I—I shall have to go back to the 'I's,'" she said. "But I shall know the roses are here. You must send me a picture of them."

Somehow I was less enthusiastic over the next arch, but her spirits soon came back, and she sawed the next batch of stripping with greater precision and skill in the use of the saw—and a more reckless show of stocking. "See!" she cried, "how much I'm improving! I didn't splinter any of the ends this time!"

"Fine," said I. "You can tackle the firewood in the orchard soon!"

We got up two more arches, working close together,

intent upon our task. As each arch, with its piers, took up eight feet, and the central arch would take up twelve, we should need exactly a dozen arches to complete the trellis. Here were four of them done!

"Hooray!" cried the girl, as the fourth was finished. "How we are getting on!"

"I could never have done it alone," said I. "You have really been a great help."

"Oh, I hope so!" she exclaimed. "I haven't had so much fun in years."

We looked into the vegetable garden, and saw that Mike had gone, and Joe, too. My watch and the lengthening shadows warned me it was approaching six. Hot and pleasantly tired, we packed up the tools on the barrow, and wheeled them to the shed.

"Now shall we go and hear the hermit?" I asked.

She nodded, and we went down through the orchard, past the pool where the iris buds were already showing a spike of greenish white, through the maples, and into the pines. There we stood, side by side, in the quiet hush of coming sunset, and waited for the fairy horn. A song sparrow was singing out by the road, and the thin, sweet flutings of a Peabody came from the pasture. But the thrush was silent.

"Please sing, Mr. Thrush!" she pleaded, looking at me after she spoke, with a wistful little smile of apology for her foolishness. "I want so to hear him again," she

said. "We don't hear thrushes in New York, nor smell pine trees, nor feel this sweet, cool silence. Oh, the good pines!"

"He will sing to-morrow," said I. "There is no opera on Thursdays."

Her eyes twinkled once more. "Perhaps he has that terrible disease, 'sudden indisposition'," she laughed. "Come, we must go home to supper. It will take me hours to get clean."

Out in the open, she looked at her hands. "See, I've begun to get callouses, too!" she exclaimed, holding out her palms proudly.

"You've got blisters," said I. "No work for you to-morrow! Let me see."

I touched her hand, as we paused beneath a blossoming apple tree, with the fragrance shedding about us. Our eyes met, too, as I did so. She drew her hand back gently, as the colour came to her cheeks. We walked on in silence, as far as the pump. Mike had finished milking, and had gone home. The stable was closed. Inside, we could hear the animals stamp. Suddenly I put my head under the pump spout, and asked her to work the handle. Laughing, she did so, and as I raised my dripping head, I saw her standing with the low western sun full upon her, her eyes laughing into mine, her nose and lips provocative, her plain blouse waist open at the throat so that I could see the gurgle of laughter rise.

"Why did you do that?" she asked, arrested, perhaps, by something in my gaze.

"Because," I answered, "there's a ghost lives in this well, and maybe with your aid I shall pump it out."

"Don't you like the ghost?" she said.

"Very much," said I, as we climbed the slope to Bert's.

That evening Mrs. Bert sent her off to bed, and I toiled cheerfully at my manuscripts till the unholy hour of eleven.

Chapter VIII

I PICK PAINT AND A QUARREL

THE next morning at breakfast a burned nose confronted me across the table, and the possessor ruefully regarded her sore palms.

"No work for you to-day," said I. "You will just have to pick out colours for me. The painters are coming."

I spoke as if we were old friends. I spoke as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a young woman to accompany a young man to his house and pick out paint for him. I spoke, also, as if I had never cursed the prospect of petticoats that advise. So soon can one pair of eyes undo our prejudices, and so easily are the conventions forgotten, in the natural life of the country—at least by such persons as never were much bothered by them, anyhow!

Evidently they had never greatly troubled Miss Goodwin, or she was not disposed to let them trouble her now, for ten minutes later we went down the road together, and found the painters already unloading their wagon. The reliable Hard Cider, true to his word, had procured them for me, which, as I afterward have dis-

covered, was something of a feat in Bentford, where promises are more common than fulfilment.

"It seems a pity to paint the outside of the house," said Miss Goodwin; "it's such a lovely weathered gray now. What colour is it going to be?"

"No colour," said I. "White, with green blinds, of course. But the inside will be done first."

We entered, with the boss painter, and went into the south room, which had already become the natural centre of the house.

"Now," said I, "I'm not going to paper any rooms if I can help it. I want the walls calcimined. They look pretty sound to me, barring some places where you'll have to patch the plaster. Can it be done?"

The painter walked about the room carefully, then examined the hall, the north room, and the dining-room, while the girl and I followed him.

"Sure," he said.

"All right; then I want this room done first, as I'm anxious to get my books unpacked and my desk set up. Now, what colour shall it be?" I turned toward Miss Goodwin as I spoke.

She shook her head. "I'm not going to say a word," she answered. "This is your room."

"I suppose you want the woodwork white?" the painter suggested. "Those old mantels, for instance."

"Cream white, not dead white," said I. "Wait a minute." I ran to the shed and brought back two

more of my pictures, an etching by Cameron which our professor of fine arts had once given me, and an oil painting acquired in a moment of rash expenditure several years before—the long line of Beacon Street houses across the Charles with the church spires rising here and there, and to the left Beacon Hill piling up to the golden dome of the State House.

"Now," said I, "the walls have got to set off both these pictures, and books besides. They've got to be neutral. I want a greenish, brownish, yellowish olive, with the old beam in the centre of the ceiling in the same key, only a bit darker."

The girl and the painter both laughed.

"You are so definite," said she.

"But I want an indefinite tint," I replied.

Again she laughed, though the painter looked puzzled.

"I'll get my colours," he said.

He mixed what he considered an olive tint, and laid a streak of it on the plaster.

"Too green," said I.

He added something and tried again.

"Too gray," said Miss Goodwin, forgetful, and then quickly supplemented, "isn't it?"

He added something else.

"Too brown," said I.

Once more he patiently mixed.

"Too muddy coloured," I corrected.

"It must be fun to be a painter," said the girl.

"Oh, we get used to it," said he.

"Try a little yellow," I suggested. "I want that tint warmed up a trifle."

He did so, and something emerged which looked right to me.

"That's a queer olive, though," said the girl.

"Well, it's a greenish, brownish, yellowish olive, isn't it?" I replied. "That's what I asked for! Do the walls in this colour, and paint the woodwork, mantels, and the panels over them and the bookcase and settles a creamy white, with a creamy white on the ceiling, and oil up this old floor and stain the strip of new boards where the partition was, and my room is ready!"

We went into the little hall, where the front door stood open, and we could see Hard on a ladder mending the beautiful carved door cap outside.

"This hall the same colour," said I, "with the rails of the baluster in the cream white of the trim."

We went into the northeast room and the dining-room behind it.

"Same colour here?" asked the painter.

I was about to answer yes, when Miss Goodwin spoke. "I should think you'd want these rooms lighter in colour," she said, "as they face the north."

"The lady's right," said the painter.

"They always are," I smiled. "You two fix up the colour for this room, then. We can decide on the other rooms after these downstairs are done."

"No," cried the girl, "I won't do anything of the kind! You might not like what I picked."

"Incredible!" said I. "I've really got to get to work outside now." And I ran off, leaving her looking a little angrily, I thought, after me.

I was so impatient to see how my lawn was going to look that I went to the shed to hunt up a dummy sundial post which I could set up and mark off my beds around it, getting them manured for planting. At first I could find nothing, except some old logs, but looking up presently into a loft under the eaves, I saw the dusty end of what looked like a Doric pillar poking out. I scrambled up and pulled forth, to my joy, a wooden pillar about nine feet long, in excellent preservation. How it got there, I had no idea. The dust had evidently accumulated on it for years. It had once been painted white. I dragged the heavy column down, and ran to get Hard Cider.

He grunted. "All yer side porch pillars wuz them kind when I wuz a boy," he said. "Old man Noble's fust wife didn't like the porch—thought it kept light out o' the kitchen, an' hed it took down. His second wife hed it put back, but some o' the columns hed got lost, or burnt up, I reckon, so's they put it back with them square posts yer hev now. I reckon that column's nigh on a century old."

I sawed off the upper four feet carefully, and stowed the remainder back in the loft. Then I made a square

base of planking, a temporary one till I could build a brick foundation, washed off the dust, and took my pedestal around to the lawn. With a ball of twine tied to the centre of the south room door I ran a line directly out to the rose trellis, and midway between the trellis and where the edge of my pergola was to be I placed the pillar. Then I took out my knife, and thrust the blade lightly in at an angle, to simulate the dial marker, and turned to call Miss Goodwin.

But she was already standing in the door.

"Oh!" she cried, running lightly down the plank and across the ground, "a sundial already, and a real pedestal! Come away from it a little, and see how it seems to focus all the sunlight."

We stood off near the house, and looked at the white column in mid-lawn. It did indeed seem to draw in the sunlight to this level spot before the dwelling, even though it rose from the brown earth instead of rich greensward, and even though beyond it was but the unsightly, half-finished, naked trellis. Even as we watched, a bird came swooping across the lawn, alighted on my knife handle, and began to carol.

"Oh, the darling!" cried Miss Goodwin. "He understands!"

I was very well content. I had unexpectedly found a pedestal, and was experiencing for the first time the real sensation of garden warmth and intimacy and focussed light which a sundial, rightly placed, can bring.

I did not speak, and presently beside me I heard a voice saying, "But I forgot that I am angry at you."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because you had no right to leave me to pick out the paint for your dining-room," said she.

"Why not?" said I. "You picked out the name of my house and the style of the rose trellis."

"That was different," she replied.

"I don't see why."

"Then you are extremely stupid," she answered.

"Doubtless," said I. "But that doesn't help me any to understand, you know."

"Come," she replied, "and see if the paint suits you. Then I must go home and write some letters."

The paint and calcimine tint suited me, of course. They were a warm, golden cream and a very delicate buff, which made the rooms seem lighter. I thanked her as heartily as I could, and watched her depart up the road, pausing only long enough to press to her nose the first bud on the great lilac tree at the corner.

The place seemed curiously deserted after she had gone. I went out into the vegetable area to see if Mike and Joe were getting on all right, and to watch them planting, that I might learn how it was done.

"Aren't we pretty late with all these seeds?" I asked.

Mike shook his head. "There's some things, like peas, ye can't get in too soon," he said, "and some like

termaters and cauliflowers that ye got to start under glass; but up here in these mountains, with the frosts comin' and the cold nights, ye don't know when, ye can wait till the middle o' May and dump on the manure and get yer crop with the next man."

"Well, I'm trusting you," said I. "But next year we'll start earlier, just the same. I don't want to be with the next man. I want to beat him. I don't see why that isn't what a farmer should do as well as a merchant."

"Sure, it is," said Mike, "only the God almighty don't like it, and sinds frosts down upon yer presoomin'."

"You talk like a Calvinist," I laughed.

"Sure, I dunno what that is," Mike replied. "How much of this last plantin' of corn shall I put in? It's Stowell's Evergreen. Maybe it's the frosts will get it all, come September."

"We'll take a chance," said I. "I'm a gambler. Put in all you've got room for."

"Yes, sor," said he, "and it's pea brush we'll be needin' soon for them early peas I planted late. Is it Joe I shall sind to cut some in the pasture lot behind the barn?"

I hadn't thought of my ten-acre pasture across the road. In fact, I had scarcely been in it. "What's there to cut?" I asked.

"Poverty birch," said Mike. "Sure, it's walkin' up from the brook like it was a weed, which it are, and

eatin' the good grass up. The pasture will be better for it out."

"Cut away, then," said I. "But, mind you, no other trees!"

I went back to my sundial, between two rows of cauliflower plants Bert had given to me, and which Mike had set out thus early for an experiment, between threads of sprouting radishes, lines of onion sets, and other succulent evidences of the season to come. As I started to mark out the beds around the pedestal, I found myself wishing Miss Goodwin were there to advise me. I made a few marks on the ground, surveyed the pattern, didn't like it, could think of nothing better, and resolved to await her return. I took a few steps toward the house. Then I stopped.

"No, you fool," I said to myself. "This is your house. You are going to live in it. If you can't plan it yourself, you'd better go back to teaching."

I returned to the dial and went to work again. She had suggested a ring of low flowers, and some taller ones, irregularly set. I measured off a six-foot circle about the pedestal, as the inner ring of the beds, and left four breaks in it, to the four cardinal points of the compass, where the turf or paths could come in to the dial. Then I extended the sides of these four beds on the straight axes of the paths for three feet, and made the rear sides not on the regular arc of the inner edges, but full of irregularities, almost of bulges, where I

would set clumps of tall flowers. "She'll like that, I guess," I reflected, and then caught myself at it, and grinned rather sheepishly.

I rose and went to the barn for a load of manure. The great pile which had been there when I bought the place was already used up, but I secured enough litter with a rake to cover the beds and brought it back. By then the hour was nearly twelve, and consequently too late to spade it under, so I went into the house to see if the painters were getting the colour right. They were, or as nearly right as it seems to be humanly possible for house painters to do, and I plodded up the road to dinner. As I passed my potato field, I saw rows of green shoots above the ground, and out under my lone pine I saw a figure, sitting in the shadow on the stone wall.

I climbed through the brambles over the wall, and walked down the aisles of potatoes toward her.

"It is time for dinner," I said meekly.

She looked up. "Is it? I have been listening to the old pine talk."

"What was he saying?" I asked.

"Things you wouldn't understand," said she.

"About words in 'hy'?"

She shook her head. "Not at all; nothing quite so stupid—but nearly as saddening." She rose to her feet, and her eyes looked into mine, enigmatically wistful.

"I missed you after you went away from Twin Fires," said I suddenly. "I don't know whether I got the sundial beds right or not. Won't you please come back to tell me? Or am I stupid again, and mustn't you advise me about that?"

Her eyes twinkled a little. "You are still very stupid," she said, "but perhaps I will consent to give my invaluable advice on this important subject."

"Good!" I cried. "And we'll build some more trellis if your hands are better."

"My hands are all right," she said, with the faintest emphasis on the noun, which made a variety of perplexing interpretations possible and kept me silent as I helped her over the wall into Bert's great cauliflower field, and we tramped through the soft soil toward the house.

Chapter IX

WE SEAT THOREAU IN THE CHIMNEY NOOK, AND I WRITE A SONNET

AFTER dinner she approved the sundial beds with a mock-judicial gravity, and then she went at the trellis, working with a kind of impersonal nervous intensity that troubled me, I didn't quite know why. She said, with a brief laugh, it was because she had suggested the structure, and she could never rest till any job she had undertaken was completed.

"You live too hard," said I. "That's the trouble with most of us nowadays. We are over-civilized. We don't know how to take things easy, because we have the vague idea of so many other things to be done always crowding across the threshold of our consciousness."

"Perhaps," she answered. "The 'J' words, for instance, if they get 'I' done before my return. Thank heaven, 'J' hasn't contributed so many words to science as 'Hy'!"

"Forget the dictionary!" I cried. "You are going to stay here a long time—till these roses bloom, or at any rate till the sundial beds have come to flower.

Besides, there'll be a lot of things about my house where your advice cannot be spared."

She darted a quick look at me, and turned back to the trellis, where she was nailing on strips. She did not speak, and when I came over to face her, with a post for the next arch, I saw that her eyes were moist. She turned her face half away, blinking her eyelids hard, bit her lip, then picked up the level and set it with a smack against the post. I put my hand over hers—both our hands were dirty!—and said, "What is the matter? Are you tired?"

"Please, please—level this post," she replied.

"Are you tired?"

"No, I'm not tired. I'm a fool. Come, we must finish the arch!"

"I guess we won't do any more arches to-day," I replied, "or you won't, at any rate. You'll go home and rest."

She looked at me an instant with just the hint of her twinkle coming back. "I'm so unused to taking orders," she said, "that I've lost the art of obedience. Move the post a little to the right, please."

I did so, and we worked on in silence. We had built the wide central arch by the time the sun began to drop down into our faces. There were only five arches more to build.

"I shall write to-night and have the roses hurried along," said I.

We walked back toward the house and looked over the lawn, past the sundial, and saw the farm through the trellis, and beyond the farm the trees at the edge of my clearing, and then a distant roof or two, and the far hills. The apple blossoms were fragrant in the orchard. The persistent song sparrows were singing. The shadow of the dial post stretched far out toward the east.

"It is pointing toward the brook," said I. "Shall we go and ask the thrush to sing?"

She shook her head. "Not to-night," she said briefly, and I walked, grieved and puzzling, up the road by her side.

The next day she pleaded a headache, and I went to the farm alone. The south room was shining with its first coat of paint. Hard was, as he put it, "seein' daylight" in his work, and I realized that soon I should be sending for Mrs. Pillig and son Peter and moving away from Bert's. Somehow the idea made me perversely melancholy. The house seemed lonely as I wandered through it, sniffing the strong odour of fresh paint.

I went out to find Mike, and learned that the small fruits had come—a hundred red raspberries, fifty blackcaps, twenty-five of the yellow variety, a hundred blackberries, not to mention currant bushes. We walked about the garden to find the best site for them, and finally chose for the berries the end of the slope between the vegetables and field crops and the pines

and tamaracks. Here was a long, narrow stretch where the brook in times past had made the soil sandy, so that it drained well, but where the swampy land was close enough to offer the least danger of complete drying out. While Mike and Joe were ploughing the dressing under and harrowing, I took my garden manual in hand and carefully sorted out the varieties according to their bearing season. Then we began planting them in rows.

There is no berry so fascinating nor so delicious to me as a raspberry, especially at breakfast, half hidden under golden cream. There is something soft and cool and wild about it; it is the feline of berries. As we planted, I could almost smell the fruit. I could fancy the joy of walking between these dewy rows in the fresh morning sun and picking my breakfast. I could imagine the crates of ripe fruit sent to market.

In the pleasures of my fancy and the monotony of measured planting, I lost track of time, nor did I think of Miss Goodwin. But thought of her returned at noon, however, when Mrs. Bert told me her head had felt better and she had gone off for a day's trolley trip to see the country. After all, it was rather selfish of me not to show her the country! Besides, I hadn't seen it myself. I had been too busy. Why shouldn't I take a day off? But I couldn't do that till the berries were all in, and that afternoon was not enough to finish them. It took all of the next day as well, and

most of the day following, for we had the double rows of wire to mount as supports for the vines, and the currant bushes to set in as a border to the garden six feet south of the rose trellis. Most of this work I did alone, leaving Mike free for other tasks, and Joe free to cut the pea brush. I saw Miss Goodwin only at meals. After supper I had to drive myself to my manuscripts.

"It will be you who will need a rest soon," she said the second morning, as she came down to breakfast and found me hard at work out on the front porch.

"I'm going to take one—with you!" said I. "I want to see the country, too."

She smiled a little, and picked a lilac bud, holding it to her nose. She seemed quite far away now. The first few days of our rapid intimacy had passed, and now she was as much a stranger to me as on that first meeting in the pines. I said nothing about her coming to the farm; I don't know why. Somehow, I was piqued. I wished her to make the first move. In some way, it was all due to my asking her to choose the paint for my dining-room, and that seemed to me ridiculous. I fear my manner showed my pique a trifle, for I did not see her anywhere about when I left after breakfast.

That evening I found the second coat of paint practically dry in the south room, and there was no reason why I shouldn't install my desk at last, order some

kerosene for my student lamp, and do my work there, in my own new home, by my twin fires. The wind was east as I walked back to supper, and there was no sun to wake me in the morning, so that I slept till half-past six. Outside the rain was pouring steadily down, and I found Bert rejoicing, for it was badly needed. After breakfast I waylaid Miss Goodwin.

"No work on the trellis to-day," said I, swallowing my pique; "so I'm going to fix up the south room. I'm going to make twin fires out of some of the nice, fragrant apple wood you haven't sawed for me, and hang the Hiroshiges, and unpack the books, and have an elegant time—if you don't make me do it alone."

The girl shot a look around Mrs. Bert's sitting-room, where a small stuffed owl stood on the mantel under a glass case and a transparent pink muslin sack filled with burst milkweed pods was draped over a crayon portrait of Bert as a young man. I followed her glance and then our eyes met.

"Just the same, they are dear, good souls," she smiled.

"Of course," I answered. "But to sit here on a cold, rainy day! You may read by the fire while I work. Only please come!"

"May I read 'The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century,' Doctor Upton?" she said.

"You may read the dictionary, if you wish," I replied.

She went to get her raincoat. It was cold out of doors, and the rain drove in our faces as we splashed down the road. The painters had made a fire in the kitchen range, and as we stepped in the warmth greeted us in a curious, friendly way. I brought several logs of dead apple wood into the big room, made a second trip for kindlings, brought my one pair of andirons from the shed and improvised a pair with bricks for the other fireplace, and soon had the twin hearths cheerful with dancing flames. Then I went back to the shed, and brought the two cushions which had been on my window-seats at college, to place them on the settle. But as I came into the room, instead of finding the girl waiting to sit by the fire, I saw her with sleeves rolled up washing the west window. Her body was outlined against the light, her hair making an aura about her head. As she turned a little, I caught the saucy grace of her profile. She was so intent upon her task that she had not heard me enter, and I paused a full moment watching her. Then I dropped the cushions and cried, "Come, here's your seat! That is no task for a Ph.D."

"I don't want a seat," she laughed. "I'm having a grand time, and don't care to have my erudition thrown in my face. I love to wash windows."

"But 'The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century?'" said I.

"The whole nineteenth century is on these windows,"

she replied. "I've got to scrub here to get at its foundations."

"But you'll get tired again," I laughed, though with real solicitude. "I didn't want you to come to work—only to be company."

"I don't know how to be company. Please get me some fresh hot water."

I took the pail and fetched obediently. Then, while she worked at the windows, I began tugging things in from the shed, calling Joe from the barn to help me with the desk and bookcases. The desk, obviously, went by the west window, where the light would come from the left. My five bookcases, which had been made for my college rooms, of uniform size, were placed, four along the south wall, filling the spaces between the central door and the two windows, and the two windows and the end walls, with the fifth on the west wall between the window and the south, where I could have my reference books close to my desk chair. My piano, which had stood in the dining-room ever since the furniture had arrived, we unboxed, wheeled in to fill the space between the small east windows, and took the covers off.

I looked around. Already the place was assuming a homelike air, and the long room had contracted into intimacy. The girl dropped her rag into the pail, and stood looking about.

"Oh, the nice room!" she cried. "And oh, the dirty piano!"

I went out to begin on the books, and when I returned with the first load (I used a wheelbarrow, and wheeled a big load covered with my raincoat as far as the front door, and up into the hall on a plank), Miss Goodwin was scrubbing the keys. As I began to wipe off the books and set them into the cases, I could hear that peculiar dust-cloth glissando which denotes domestic operations on the piano, and which brings curiously home to a man memories of his mother. When I returned with the next load, I brought the piano bench, as well. The girl was busy with the east window, and I set the bench down in silence. She was seated upon it, when I arrived with the third load, and through the house were dancing the sounds of a Bach gavotte.

She stopped playing as I entered, and looked up with a little smile of apology.

"Please go on!" I cried.

"But you play," she said, "and I just drum. It's too silly."

"I play with one finger only," said I, "the forefinger of the right hand."

"Then why do you have the piano?"

"For you," I smiled. "Please play on. You can't guess how pleasant it is, how—how—homelike."

She wheeled back and let her hands fall on the keys, rippling by a natural suggestion into the old tune "Amaryllis." The logs were crackling. The gay old

measures flooded the room with sound. My head nodded in time, as I stacked the books on the shelves.

Suddenly the music stopped, and with a rustle of skirts the girl was beside me. "There! Now I must help you with the books!" she cried. "What's this? Oh, you're not putting them up right at all! Here's James's 'Pragmatism' hobnobbing with 'The Freedom of the Will.' Oh, horrors, and 'Cranford' next to Guy de Maupassant! I'm sure that isn't proper!"

"On the contrary," said I, "it ought to prove a fine thing for both of them."

She began to inspect titles, pulling out books here, substituting others there, carrying some to other cases. "You won't know where anything is, anyhow, in these new surroundings," she said, "so you might as well start right—separate cases for fiction, history, philosophy, and so on. Please have the poetry over the settle by the fire."

"Surely," said I. "That goes without saying. Here, I'll lug the books in, and you put 'em up. Only I insist on the reference books going over by my desk."

"Yes, sir, you may have them," she laughed.

I wheeled in load after load. "Lord," I cried, "of the making of many books, *et cetera!* I'll never buy another one, or else I'll never move again."

"You'll never move again, you mean," said she. "Look, all the nice poetry by the west fireplace. Don't the green Globe editions look pretty in the white cases?

And Keats right by the chimney. Please, may I put the garden books, and old Mr. Thoreau, by the east fire?"

"Give old Mr. Thoreau any seat he wants," said I, "only Mr. Emerson must sit beside him."

"Where's Mr. Emerson? Oh, yes, here he is, in a blue suit. Here, we'll plant the rose of beauty on the brow of chaos!"

She took the set of Emerson and placed it in the top shelf by the east fireplace, above a tumbled heap of unassorted volumes, standing back to survey it with her gurgling laugh. "What is so decorative as books?" she cried. "They beat pictures or wall paper. Oh, the nice room, the nice books, nice old Mr. Emerson, nice twin fires!"

"And nice librarian," I added.

She darted a look at me, laughed with heightened colour, and herself added, with a glance at her wrist watch, "And nice dinner!"

I brought back some of my manuscripts after dinner, in case the room should be completed before supper time. We attacked it again with enthusiasm, hers being no less, apparently, than mine, for it was indeed wonderful to see the place emerge from bareness into the most alluring charm as the books filled the shelves, as my two Morris chairs were placed before the fires, as my three or four treasured rugs were unrolled on the rather uneven but charmingly old floor which just fitted

the old, rugged hearthstones, and finally as the two bright Hiroshiges were placed in the centre of the two white wood panels over the fireplaces, and the other pictures hung over the bookcases.

"Wait," cried the girl suddenly. "Have you any vases?"

"A couple of glass ones," I said. "Why?"

"Get them, and never mind."

I found the barrel which contained breakables in the shed, unpacked it, and brought in the contents—a few vases, my college tea set, a little Tanagra dancing-girl. I placed the dancing figure on top of the shelf between the settles, and Miss Goodwin set the tea things on my one table by the south door. Then she got an umbrella and vanished. A few minutes later she returned with two clumps of sweet flag blades from the brookside, placed one in each of the small vases, and stood them on the twin mantels, beneath the Japanese prints.

"There!" she cried, clapping her hands. "Now what do you think of your room?"

I looked at the young green spears, at the bookcases with their patterns of colour, at the warm rugs on the floor, at my desk ready for me by the window, at the student lamp upon it, at the crimson cushions on the twin settles, at the leaping flames on the hearths, and then at the bright, flushed, eager face of the girl, raindrops glistening in her hair.



She was sitting with a closed book on her knee, gazing into the fire

"I think it is wonderful," said I. "I have my home at last! And how you have helped me!"

"Yes, you have your home," said she. "Oh, it is such a nice one!"

She turned away, and went over to the east fire, poking it with her toe. I lit my pipe, sat down at my old, familiar desk, heaved a great sigh of comfort, and opened a manuscript.

"It's only four o'clock," said I. "I can get in that hour I wasted in sleep this morning. Can you find something to read?"

"I ought to," she smiled.

I plunged into the manuscript—a silly novel. I heard Miss Goodwin on the other side of the settle, taking down a book. I read on. The room was very still. Presently the stillness roused me from my work, and I looked up. I could not see the girl, so I rose from my chair and tiptoed around the settle. She was sitting with a closed book on her knee, gazing into the fire. I sat down, too, and touched her arm.

"What is there?" I asked, pointing to the flames.

She looked around, with a half-wistful little smile. "You are not making up that lost hour," she answered.

"But the room was so still," said I, "that I wondered where you were."

"Perhaps I was many miles away," she replied. "Do you want me to make a noise?"

"You might sing for me."

"I should hate to make the thrush jealous. No, my accomplishments cease with philology. I'm very happy here, really. You must go back to your work."

I went back, and read a few more pages of the silly novel.

"This story is so silly I really think it would be a success," I called out.

A head peeped up at me over the settle. "You aren't working," she reproached. "I'm going away, so you won't have me to talk to."

"Very well, I'll go with you," I cried, slamming the manuscript into a drawer. "I'll come down here and work after supper."

"No, you'll work till five o'clock."

"Not unless you'll stay!"

The eyes looked at me over the settle, and I looked steadily back. We each smiled a little, silently.

"Very well," said she, as the head disappeared.

I read on, vaguely aware that the west was breaking, and the room growing warm. Presently I heard a window opened and felt the cooler rush of rain-freshened air from the fragrant orchard. Then I heard the painters come downstairs, talking, and tramp out through the kitchen. It was five o'clock. But I still read on, to finish a chapter. The painters had departed. The entire house was still.

Suddenly there stole through the room the soft andante theme of a Mozart sonata, and the low sun at

almost the same instant dropped into the clear blue hole in the west and flooded the room. I let the manuscript fall, and sat listening peacefully for a full minute. Then I moved across the floor and stood behind the player. How cheerful the room looked, how booky and old-fashioned! It seemed as if I had always dwelt there. It seemed as if this figure at the piano had always dwelt there. How easy it would be to put out my hands and rest them on her shoulders, and lay my cheek to her hair! The impulse was ridiculously strong to do so, and I tingled to my finger tips with a strange excitement.

"Come," I said, "it is after five, and the sun is out. We will go to hear the thrush."

The girl faced around on the bench, raising her face to mine, "Yes, let us," she answered. "How lovely the room looks now. Oh, the nice new old room!"

She lingered in the doorway a second, and then we stepped out of the front entrance, where we stood entranced by the freshness of the rain-washed world in the low light of afternoon, and the heavy fragrance of wet lilac buds enveloped us. Then the girl gathered her skirts up and we went down through the orchard, where the ground was strewn with the fallen petals, through the maples where the song sparrow was singing, and in among the dripping pines. The brook was whispering secret things, and the drip from the trees made a soft tinkle, just detectable, on its pools.

We waited one minute, two minutes, three minutes in silence, and then the fairy clarion sounded, the "cool bars of melody from the everlasting evening." It sounded with a thrilling nearness, so lovely that it almost hurt, and instinctively I put out my hand and felt for hers. She yielded it, and so we stood, hand in hand, while the thrush sang once, twice, three times, now near, now farther away, and then it seemed from the very edge of my clearing. I still held her hand, as we waited for another burst of melody. But he evidently did not intend to sing again. My fingers closed tighter over hers as I felt her face turn toward mine, and she answered their pressure while her eyes glistened, I thought, with tears. Then her hand slipped away.

"Don't speak," she said, leading the way out of the grove.

We went into the house again to make sure that the fires had burned down. The room was darker now, filled with twilight shadows. The last of the logs were glowing red on the hearths, and the air was hot and heavy after the fresh outdoors. But how cheerful, how friendly, how like a human thing, with human feelings of warmth and welcome, the room seemed to me!

"It has been a wonderful day," said I, as we turned from the fires to pass out. "I wonder if I shall ever have so much joy again in my house?"

The girl at my side did not answer. I looked at her, and saw that she was struggling with tears.

I did instinctively the only thing my clumsy ignorance could suggest—put my hand upon hers. She withdrew it quickly.

"No, no!" she cried under her breath. "Oh, I am such a fool! Fool—Middle English *fool, fole, fol;* Icelandic, *fol;* old French *fol*—always the same word!"

She broke into a plaintive little laugh, ran through the hall and lifted the stove lid to see if the fire there was out, and hastened to the road, where I had difficulty to keep pace with her as we walked up the slope to supper.

"You need a rest more than you think, I guess," I tried to say, but she only answered, "I need it less!" and made off at once to her room. That night I didn't go back to my house to work. I didn't work at all. I looked out of my window at a young moon for a long while, and then—yes, I confess it, though I was thirty years old, I wrote a sonnet!

Chapter X

WE CLIMB A HILL TOGETHER

THE next morning I did not urge Miss Goodwin to come to the farm. In fact, I urged her to sit in the sun and rest. It was a glorious day, a real June day, though June was not due till the following Wednesday. It was Sunday, the Sunday preceding Memorial Day. But, as my farm was so far from the centre of the village, and my lawn was so screened from the roads by the house on one side and the pines and maples on the other, I resolved to hazard my reputation and go at my lawn, which the rain at last had settled. I hitched the horse to my improvised drag and smoothed it again, several times, in default of a roller. Then I led the horse back to the barn.

As I came to the barn door again, a carryall was passing, with a woman and a stout girl on the back seat, and another stout girl and a man on the front seat. The women were dressed in their starched best, the man, an elderly farmer with a white beard, in the blue uniform and slouch hat of the G. A. R. They were going to Memorial service. I instinctively saluted as the old fellow nodded to me in his friendly, country

way, and he dropped the reins with a pleased smile and brought his own hand snap up to his hat brim. I watched the carryall disappear, hearing it rattle over the bridge across my brook, and for the first time felt myself a stranger in this community. I suddenly wanted to go with them to church, to hear the drone of the organ and the soft wind rushing by the open windows, bringing in the scent of lilacs, to see the faces of my neighbours about me, to chat with them on the church steps when the service was over. I realized how absorbed I had been in my own little farm, and resolved to begin getting acquainted with the town as soon as possible. Then I picked up a rake, and went back to the lawn.

As soon as I had eliminated the horse's hoofprints, I got a bag of lawn seed and scattered it, probably using a good deal more than was necessary. Mike had assured me it was too late to sow grass, but I hoped for fool's luck. I sowed it carefully about the sundial beds, so that none should fall on them, but over the rest of the lawn I let it fall from on high, delighting in the way it drifted with the gentle wind on its drop to earth. I had not sown long before the birds began to come, by ones, then by twos and threes and fours, till it seemed as if fifty of them were hopping about. I shooed them away, but back they came.

"Well," thought I, "lawn seed is not so terribly expensive, and they can't pick it all up!" I scattered it

thicker than ever, and then harrowed it under a little with a rake, working till one o'clock, for Sunday dinner was at one-thirty. Then I went back to Bert's, with only a peep into my big south room to see how cheerful it looked. I found Miss Goodwin still sitting where I had left her, under the sycamore before the house.

"You see, I've obeyed," she smiled. "I've not read, nor even thought. I've 'jest set.' But I'm beginning to get restless."

"Good," said I. "Shall we celebrate the Sabbath by taking a walk? I'd like to have you show me Bentford."

She assented, and right after dinner we set out, I having donned my knickerbockers and a collar for the first time since my arrival, and feeling no little discomfort from the starched band around my throat.

"The size of it is," I groaned, "all my clothes are now too small for me. If you stay here till July, you'll probably have to send for an entire new wardrobe."

"That's the fear which haunts me," she smiled, as we crossed my brook and turned up the hill toward the first of the big estates. In front of this estate we paused and peeped through the hedge. The family had evidently arrived, for the unmistakable sounds of a pianola were issuing from the house. The great formal garden, still gay with Darwin tulips and beginning to show banks of iris flowers against lilac shrubbery, looked extremely expensive. The residence itself, of brown

stucco, closely resembled a sublimated $100,000 ice-house. An expensive motor stood before the door.

"How rich and ugly it is," said Miss Goodwin, turning away. "Let's not look at houses. Let's find some woods to walk in."

We looked about us toward the high hills which ring the Bentford valley, and struck off toward what seemed the nearest. The side road we were on soon brought us to the main highway up the valley to the next town, and a motor whizzed past us, leaving a cloud of dust, then a second, and a third. We got off the highway as speedily as possible, crossing a farm pasture and entering the timber on the first slope of the big hill. Here a wood road led up, and we loitered along it, finding late violets and great clumps of red trilliums here and there.

The girl sprang upon the first violets with a little cry of joy, picking them eagerly and pressing them to her nose. "Smell!" she laughed, holding them up to mine. She soon had her hands full, and was forced to pass by the next bed—as I told her, with the regret of a child who has eaten all the cake he can at a church supper.

"No child ever ate all the cake he could," she laughed. "Oh, please dig up some trilliums and plant them in your garden, or rather in your woods!"

"How are we going to get them home?" said I. "We'll have to dig up some of the earth, too, with the roots."

"I know," she answered. "Even if I am a highbrow, I've not quite forgotten my childhood lessons in manual work—which I always hated till now. I'll weave a basket."

Looking about, I saw a wild grape vine, and I pulled it down from the tree to which it was clinging. "I feel like a suffragette," said I, "destroying the clinging vine."

"Cut it into two-foot lengths," she retorted, "and don't make poor puns." She sat on the brown needles at the foot of a pine, and began twisting the pieces of vine into a rough basket. I sat beside her and watched her work. Out beyond us was a sun-soaked clearing, a tiny swamp on the hillside, and the sunlight dappled in across her skirt. As she worked, a wood thrush called far off, his last long-drawn note ringing like a sweet, wistful fairy horn. The white fingers paused in their weaving, and our eyes met. She did not speak, but looked smiling into my face as the call was repeated, while her throat fluttered. Then, without speaking, she turned back to her work. I, too, was silent. What need was there of words?

"Was that a hermit, too?" she asked presently. "It sounded different."

"No, a wood thrush," said I. "He's not so Mozartian."

She finished the basket and held it out proudly. "There!" she cried. "It isn't pretty, and it isn't art, but it will hold trilliums."

She dusted off her skirt, and I helped her to her feet. We continued up the road, looking for trilliums, and when the first large clump appeared pushing up their dark red blooms from the leafy mould, we were both on our knees beside it, prying it up, earth and all. We soon had the basket filled, and then pressed on straight up the hillside, leaving the wood road. It was a steep scramble, over rocks where the thin, mossy soil slipped from under foot, and through tangles of mountain laurel bushes. I had frequently to help her, for she was not used to climbing, and she was breathing hard.

"Let's stop," said I. "This is too hard work for you."

She grasped a dead stick, like a banner staff, struck an attitude, and cried, "Excelsior!"

"No, sir," she added, "I'm going to reach the top of this hill and look down the other side if I die on the summit. I know now for the first time why Annie Peck and Hudson Stuck risked their lives on Mount Something-or-other in the Andes and Mount McKinley in Alaska. It's a grand sensation. I feel the primal urge!"

"Didn't you ever climb a mountain?" I queried, incredulous.

"Never," she answered. "Never even a baby mountain like this. My altitude record is the top step of the Columbia University library."

"You poor child!" I cried. Why, I'll *carry* you to

the top! I never realized that you were such a hopeless urbanite.

We went on more slowly, for the way was very steep now, and between helping her and holding the trilliums level I had my hands full. Laughing when we had the breath, we scrambled through the last of the shrubbery, and suddenly stood on a flat rock at the summit, with the world spread out below us like a map. I set down the basket, wiped my face, and ruefully felt of my wilted collar. The girl sank, panting, on the rock, fanned herself with her wisp of a handkerchief, and gazed out over the green Bentford valley below to the far hills in the south. The sky above us was very blue and lazy afternoon clouds were floating in it. Far up here only a few birds peeped in the scrub. We seemed strangely alone in that privacy of the peak.

"'Silent upon a peak in Darien!'" I heard her say, as if to herself. Then she turned her eager face to mine. "Isn't it wonderful!" she cried. "Look, all the world like a map below you, and all this sky to see at once, and the cooling breeze and the feeling that you are above everybody! Oh, I love it! Quick, now let me see the other side!"

She ran across the rock, and I after her. From this side we looked between the trees into the valley to the north, the next valley to Bentford, and saw a blue lake, like a piece of the sky dropped down, and several large estates, and the green and brown checkerboards of

farms, and far off a white steeple above the trees, and then once more on the horizon the eternal ring of blue mountains. Even as we gazed, from somewhere below us drifted up, faint and sweet, the sound of a church bell.

"Oh, it is nice on the roof of the world!" she cried. "Think of that—here am I, a Ph. D. in philology, and the only adjective I can find is 'nice'!"

"It's all in how you say it," I smiled. "I think I understand. I called you 'poor child' a few moments ago because you'd never been on a high hilltop. Now I take it back. Think of getting those first virgin impressions when you are old enough to appreciate them! I envy you. I was only five when they took me up Mount Washington."

"I should think you'd have insisted on the Matterhorn by the time you were ten," she laughed. "I should."

We hunted out some soft moss in the shade, and sat down to get cool in the summit breeze before the descent. The girl spoke little, her eyes wandering constantly off over the view with the light of discovery in them. In my own staid way, I had always fancied I enjoyed the quieter pleasures of the outdoors as much as any one, but before this rapture I was almost abashed. If I did not speak, it was chiefly because I feared to drop clumsy words into her mood.

But presently I did suggest that we must be starting

down. As there was no path visible—later I have found that since the advent of motors there are never any paths where the walking is in the least strenuous!—we took the way we had come, and began the descent. Naturally I went ahead, and helped her all I could. To one unaccustomed to hard walking, a steep descent is more tiresome than a climb, and I began to fear that I had led her into an excess. But she came bravely tumbling along behind. In some places I had to put up my arms and lift her down. In others she had to slide one foot far ahead for a secure resting-place, with a reckless show of stocking. But she laughed it all off gayly. We missed, somehow, the way we had taken up, and presently found ourselves on a ledge with a clean drop of eight feet. I prospected to right and left, found a place where the drop was only six, and jumped. Then she lowered the basket to me, sat on the edge herself, leaned out and put her arms about my neck, and I swung her off. As I set her on the ground again our faces were close together for an instant, and I could feel rather than see her eyes laughing into mine.

"This is a very pleasant hill," said I.

"But we are almost to the wood road now," she darted back, jumping into the lead.

A moment more, and we stood in the wood road, and presently we came upon a spring under a rock, and plunged our faces into it and drank. She looked up with the water dripping from her saucy nose, and quoted:

"'As rivers of water in a dry place.' I'm learning lots to-day. Now it's the elemental force of the Bible similes."

"All the wisdom isn't in New York—and dictionaries," said I.

"There, now you've mentioned the Dictionary! How could you!" she cried, and suddenly, like a child, snapped water into my face.

"You've ruined my collar," said I solemnly.

"Your collar looks like a fat man's at a dance in July," said she. "Let's give the poor trilliums a drink."

She put the basket by the spring, dipped her hands in the water, and then let palmsful drop on the wilted flowers. "How woodsy they smell!" she cried, leaning over them. "Now I'm going to wash my face again."

She was like a child. She buried her face in the water, and when she emerged the little curly hairs on her temples were dripping. "I'd like to wade in it!" she exclaimed. "I wonder if I dare!"

"Go ahead," said I. "I'll go down the road and wait."

"That wouldn't be daring," she twinkled.

"Well, I'll sit here and wait."

She looked at me saucily, and laughed, shaking her head.

"Coward," said I.

But she only laughed again, sprang up, and started rapidly away.

I caught her by the arm. "Easy, easy," I cautioned. "You're a broken-down, nervous wreck, remember. You mustn't overdo things."

Her moods were many that afternoon. Again she looked at me, but didn't laugh. Her eyes, instead, held a sort of startled gratitude, like those of a person, unused to kindness, suddenly befriended. She was no longer the child let loose in the woods. She walked slowly at my side, and so we came down to the high-road again. At the road we looked back to the hilltop where we had been.

"How much easier the climb looks than it is," said she.

"That's the way of hills—and other things," said I sententiously.

"I knew about the other things," she answered. "Now I've learned it about the hills. It seems as if I were learning all the old similes wrong end foremost, doesn't it?—springs and—and all?"

Her tone was wistful, and it was with difficulty that I refrained from touching her hand. "Oh, there's something to be said for that method," I answered cheerfully. "Think of all the pleasant things you have to learn. The other way around you get the grim realism last."

But a thought plagued her as we turned down the side road to my house. However, her face cleared as we drew near, and as the house itself appeared she

clapped her hands, crying, "Now, where are we going to put the trilliums?"

"At the edge of the pines," I suggested, "where they can talk with the brook?"

"Yes, that's the place." Suddenly she paused, looked back up the slope, and cried, "Do you suppose this brook is that spring?"

I hastily ran over the contour of the country we had passed through, and saw that indeed the spring must be its headwaters.

"I'm so glad!" she cried.

"Why?" I asked.

She darted a look at me, with twinkling eyes. "I shan't tell you," she said.

I got a trowel, and we planted the withered trilliums in partial shade between the maples and the pines, and gave them water. Then I showed her the newly sown lawn, and we peeped in to see the Hiroshiges over the twin fires.

"Now, home and to bed for you," I cried. "I know you've done too much."

"I know I've had a wonderful time," she answered soberly. "I've—I've—it's hard to explain—but I've somehow connected up this house with the wild country about it. Do you understand? If I had a house in the country, I should want it where I could get out, this way, on a Sunday afternoon into the woods and bring home trilliums. It wouldn't seem right, complete, if I

couldn't. I'd want my own dear garden, and then a great big, God's garden over the fence somewhere."

"That is how I feel, too," said I. "Only I want, also, to connect up my place with my neighbours; I want myself to be a part of the human environment. I thought of that this morning, as I saw the folks going by to church. If I ever get Twin Fires done, I'm going to join the Grange!"

"But Twin Fires comes first, doesn't it? I fear I've been selfish to drag you off to-day."

"Drag me off is good!" I laughed. "You poor little city-bred, you, as if your enjoyment hadn't given me the happiest day of my life! Only I'm afraid you did too much."

"I *am* pretty tired," she admitted, with a happy smile. "But I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

I was pretty tired myself, but I did a remarkably good evening's work, nevertheless, only pausing before the start to wonder why it was she wept one night when she wasn't tired, and smiled the next when she had tramped ten miles. But a man cannot afford to ponder such problems in feminine psychology too closely if he has anything else to do!

Chapter XI

ACTÆON AND DIANA

MEMORIAL DAY dawned fair and warm. Bert and his wife and all their "help" went off to the village after breakfast. There were no painters in my house, and Mike had milked the cows and gone home before I arrived. Miss Goodwin and I seemed to have that little section of Bentford quite to ourselves, after the last of the carryalls had rattled past, taking the veterans from Slab City to the town. Having no flag yet of my own, I borrowed one from Bert, and we hung it from a second-story window, facing the road, as our tiny contribution to the sentiment of the day. Then we tackled the rose trellis, speedily completing it, for only two arches remained to be built, one of the carpenters having built three for me the day before, while waiting for some shingles to come for the barn. Indeed, we had it done by ten o'clock.

"Now what?" said she.

I looked about the garden. The roses had not yet come, so we couldn't very well plant them. I judged that the morning of a warm, sunny day was no time to transplant seedlings. The painting was not yet com-

pleted inside, so I could fix up no more of my rooms. The vegetable garden didn't appear to need cultivation. We couldn't paint the trellis, as there was no green paint.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, "this is the first time I've been at a loss for something to do. It's a terrible sensation."

"Couldn't we build a bird bath?" she suggested.

"Madam," said I, "you are a genius!"

"At the brook?" she added.

"No, not the brook. I've a better idea. Up in Stephen Parrish's lovely garden in Cornish I once saw a bird bath which we'll try to duplicate, here on the lawn, so the birds will have the water handy to wash down the grass seed they are eating so fast. Let's see; we'll need bricks, sand, cement, a mason's trowel, a spade, a hoe, a level, a box to mix in, and a box for a frame."

I had nearly a whole bag of cement left over from my dab at orchard renovation, and there were plenty of packing-boxes. I selected one which was exactly square, about two feet on each side, and carefully knocked the bottom out. A shallower one did for a mixing-box. Down cellar, where my heater had been installed, was a barrow load of extra bricks which the plumber had left behind—inefficient business but very convenient for me. Sand was easily procured by digging a hole near the brook.

"Now," said I, "my plan is to put the bird bath on the east edge of the lawn, halfway between the house and the rose aqueduct, corresponding to the sundial in the centre, and to a white bench which will be placed at the west side when the grape arbour is built."

"Approved," laughed Miss Goodwin.

We measured off the spot, and I trundled the barrow to a pile of coal ashes behind the barn—where the previous owner had deposited them—and brought back enough to make a frost-proof foundation. After we had packed these into the ground and levelled them off, I mixed a lot of cement, laid it over thick, set the bottomless box frame down upon it, levelled that, and working from the inside, of course, laid the bricks up against the box, with a great deal of cement between them, and built up the four sides. As the girl had no gloves, I would not allow her to handle the cement (for nothing cracks the skin so badly, as I had discovered in my orchard work). But she kept busy mixing with the hoe, and handing me bricks. Some I broke and put in endwise, and I was careful to give all as irregular a setting as possible, till the top was reached. Then, of course, I laid an even line of the best bricks all the way around, and levelled them carefully. We had scarcely got the last brick on when we heard Bert's carryall rattle over the bridge and Bert's voice yelling "Dinner!"

"Oh, dear! That cement in the box will harden!" I cried. "Dump it all in."

We tipped up the box, dumped the contents down into the hollow centre of the brick work, and hurried home to a cold dinner, for Mrs. Bert, too, had taken a holiday that morning. But we were so impatient to be back at our work that we didn't care. On our return we filled the rest of the hollow up with cement and stones to within three inches of the top. Then, mixing more cement, with only two parts of fine sand to one of cement, I laid over an even surface of the mixture and filled all the corners and cracks between the top row of bricks, making a square bowl, as it were, two inches deep, on the top of the little brick pile. We let it settle a few moments, and then carefully broke away the box. There stood the bird bath, needing only some cleaning away of cement which had squeezed out between bricks, and some filling in of hollows caused in removing the frame. It really looked quite neat and attractive, and not too formally bricky, as so much cement showed.

"Can we put water in it yet?" the girl asked.

"Surely," said I. "Cement will harden under water. And we'll plant climbing nasturtiums around it, too."

I spaded up the ground at the base a little, and we went to the seed bed and dug up half a dozen climbing nasturtiums, which were already six or seven inches high. We set them in, got a pail of water from the brook and watered them, and carefully filled the bath level with the brim. Then we removed all the tools and

boxes to the shed again, and came back to the south door to survey our work.

We passed through the house. The kitchen, dining-room, and hall were finished and the paint drying. They looked very fresh and bright. The south room, as we stepped into it, was flooded with sunlight and cheerful with rugs and books. Flinging wide the glass door, we stepped out upon the terrace of the pergola-to-be, and looked toward the new bird bath. Upon its rim sat a song sparrow! Even as we watched, another came and fluttered his feet and breast daintily through the trembling little mirror of water. Then came a robin and drove them both away.

"The pig!" laughed Miss Goodwin. "Do you know, I've got a poorer opinion of robins since I came here. We city dwellers think of robins as harbingers of spring, and all that, and they epitomize the bird world. But when you really are in that world, you find they are rather large and vulgar and—and sort of upper West Side-y. They aren't half so nice as the song sparrows, or the Peabodies, and, of course, compared with the thrushes—well, it's like comparing Owen Meredith with Keats, isn't it?"

"Don't be too hard on the robins," I smiled.

We looked our fill at the new bird bath, which was already functioning, as she said her boss on the dictionary would put it, and at the white sundial pillar, and at our prospective aqueduct of roses, and at the

farm and the far hills beyond—and then she suddenly announced with great energy that she was going to saw wood.

"You may saw just one piece," said I, "and then you are going to take a book and rest. I'm going to work, myself. Twin Fires is getting in shape fast enough now so I can give up part of the daytime to the purely mundane task of paying the bills."

I wheeled up a big dead apple branch from the orchard to the wood shed, put it on the buck, gave her the buck-saw, and watched her first efforts, grinning.

"Go away," she laughed. "You bother me."

So I went, opened the west window by my desk to the wandering summer breeze, and went at my toil. Presently I heard her tiptoeing into the room.

"Done?" said I.

She nodded. "Now I want—let's see what I want —well, I guess 'Marius the Epicurean' and 'Alice in Wonderland' will do. I'm going to sit in the orchard. You work here till five or your salary will be docked. Good-bye."

I heard her go out by the front door, and then silence settled over the sun-filled, cheerful room, while I plugged away at my tasks. I don't know how long I worked, but finally my attention began to wander. I wondered if she were still in the orchard. I looked out upon the sweet stretches of my farm, with the golden light of afternoon upon it, and work became a burden.

"Shall I ever be able to work, except at night, or on rainy days!" I wondered with a smile, as I tossed the manuscript I was reading into a drawer, and went out through the front entrance.

The girl was nowhere to be seen. "She's probably in her beloved pines," I reflected. "It would be a good time to clear out a path in the pines." I turned back to get a hatchet, and then went down toward the brook.

I trod as noiselessly as I could through the maples, thinking to surprise her at her reading, and took care in the pines not to step on any dead twigs. She was nowhere to be seen near the upper end of the grove, but as I advanced I heard a splashing louder than the soft ripple of the brook, and suddenly around a thick tree at a bend in the stream, where the brook ran out toward the tamarack swamp in the corner of my farm, I came upon her. She had her shoes and stockings off, and with her skirts held high she was wading with solemn, quiet delight in a little pool. Her back was toward me. I could have discreetly retreated, and she been none the wiser. But, alas! Actæon was neither the first nor the last of his sex. The water rippled so coolly around her white ankles! The sunlight dappled down so charmingly upon her chestnut hair! And I said, with a laugh, "So that is why you wanted my brook to come from the spring!"

She turned with a little exclamation, the colour flaming

to her cheeks. Then she, too, laughed, as she stood in the brook, holding her skirts above the water.

"Consider yourself turned to a stag," she said.

"All right," I answered, "but don't stay in that cold water too long."

"If I do it will be your fault," she smiled, with a side-long glance. Then she turned and began wading tentatively downstream. But the brook deepened suddenly, and she sank almost to her knees, catching her skirts up just in time. I withdrew hastily, and called back to her to come out. When I heard her on the bank, I brought her a big handkerchief for a towel, and withdrew once more, telling her to hurry and help me plan the path through the pines. In a moment or two she was by my side. We looked at each other. Her face was still flushed, but her eyes were merry. We were standing on almost the exact spot where we had first met. But now there seemed in some subtle wise a new bond of intimacy between us, a bond that had not existed before this hour. I could not analyze it, but I felt it, and I knew she felt it. But what she said was:

"I told you to work till five o'clock."

"It's half-past four," I answered. "Besides, you must have sent for me. Something suddenly prompted me to come out and hunt you up, at any rate."

"To say I sent for you is rather—rather *forward*, under the circumstances, don't you think?"

"It might be—and it might not be," I answered. "Did you have a good time?"

"The best I ever had—till you spoiled it," she exclaimed. "Oh, the nice, cold brook! Now, let's build the path you spoke about once."

We went back to the maples, where the ground was open, and selected a spot on the edge of the pines where the path would most naturally enter. Then we let it wind along by the brook, lopping off dead branches which were in the way, and removing one or two small trees. Once we took it across the brook, laying a line of stepping-stones, and out almost to the stone wall, where one could get a momentary glimpse of the road and over the road the blue mountains. Then we bent it in again, crossed the brook once more just above the point where she had waded, and there I rolled a large stone to the edge of the pool—"for you to sit on next time," I explained. Finally we skirted the tamarack swamp, took the path up through the fringe of pines at the southern end of the field crops, and let it come back to the house beside the hayfield wall. When we reached this wall, it was nearly six o'clock.

"Now, let's just walk back through it!" she cried. "To-morrow we can bring the wheelbarrow, can't we, and pick up the litter we've made?"

"I can, at any rate, while you wade," said I.

She shot a little look up into my face. "I guess I'll help," she smiled.

In the low afternoon light we turned about and retraced our steps. There was but a fringe of pines along the southern wall, and as they were forty-year-old trees here the view both back to the house and over the wall into the next pasture was airy and open. Then the path led through a corner of the tamarack swamp where in wet weather I should have to put down some planks, and where the cattails grew breast high on either side. Then it entered the thick pine grove where a great many of the trees were evidently not more than fifteen or twenty years old and grew very close. The sunlight was shut out, save for daggers of blue between the trunks toward the west. The air seemed hushed, as if twilight were already brooding here. The little brook rippled softly.

As we came to the first crossing, I pointed to the pool, already dark with shadow, and said, "It was wrong of me to play Actæon to your Diana, but I am not ashamed nor sorry. You were very charming in the dappled light, and you were doing a natural thing, and in among these little pines, perhaps, two friends may be two friends, though they are man and woman."

She did not reply at once, but stood beside me looking at the dark pool and apparently listening to the whisper of the running water against the stepping-stones. Finally she said with a little laugh, "I have always thought that perhaps Diana was unduly severe. Come, we must be moving on."

As the path swung out by the road, we heard a carriage, and stopped, keeping very still, to watch it drive past within twenty feet of us. The occupants were quite unaware of our existence behind the thin screen of roadside alders.

"How exciting!" she half whispered when the carriage had gone by.

Once more we entered the pines, following the new path over the brook again to the spot where we first had met. There I touched her hand. "Let us wait for the thrush here," I whispered.

I could see her glimmering face lifted to mine. "Why here?" she asked.

"Because it was here we first heard him."

"Oh, forgive me," she answered. "I didn't realize! The path has made it look different, I guess. Forgive me."

She spoke very low, and her voice was grieving. Did it mean so much to her? A sudden pang went through my heart—and then a sudden hot wave of joy—and then sudden doubts. I was silent. So was the thrush. Presently I touched her hand again, gently.

"Come," said I, "we have scared him with our chopping. He will come back, though, and then we will walk down the clean path, making no noise, and hear him sing."

"Nice path," she said, "to come out of your door, through your orchard, and wander up a path by

a brook, through your own pines! Oh, fortunate mortal!"

"And find Diana wading in a pool," I added.

Again she shot an odd, questioning look at me, and shook her head. Then she ran into the south room and put the books back on the shelves.

"Which one did you read, Marius or Alice?" I asked.

"Neither," she smiled, as I locked the house behind us.

Chapter XII

SHOPPING AS A DISSIPATION

I THOUGHT I could move into my house on the first of June—but I didn't. A rainy day followed the holiday, and in the rain we first set out the roses, which had arrived by freight and which Bert brought over from the village on an early trip, and then tackled the rest of the interior of the house. I wouldn't let Miss Goodwin wash any windows, as that appeared to me to be Mrs. Pillig's job, but we hung my few remaining pictures in the dining-room and hall, set up my old mahogany drop-leaf table for a dining-table—it was large enough for four people, on a pinch—and placed the only two straight-backed chairs I possessed on either side of it.

"Dear, dear!" said I. "I was going to have Mr. and Mrs. Bert and you as my guests at my first meal, but it looks as if you'd have to come alone."

"You could bring in a chair and the piano bench from the south room," she smiled. "A more important item seems to be dishes."

"Heavens!" I cried, "I never thought of that! But I've got silver, anyway. I've kept all my mother's

silver. It's in a tin box in the bottom drawer of my desk."

"Well, that's something," she admitted. "Have you got tablecloths and napkins and kitchen utensils—to cook with, you know? And have you got some bedding for Mrs. Pillig and son Peter?"

I ruefully shook my head. "I've got a sleeping-bag, though, which Peter could put on the floor. What am I going to do?"

"I think you're going to make a trip to-morrow to the nearest large town, and stock up," she smiled.

"Am I going alone?"

She laughed at me. "No, you helpless child, mamma will go with you."

So the next morning we set off early, provided with a list of necessary articles compiled with Mrs. Bert's assistance. We tramped over to Bentford and took the train there for a city some seventeen miles away, which we reached about half-past eight. It was a clean, neat little city, with fine old trees on the residence streets, and prosperous, well-stocked shops. The girl was dressed jauntily in blue, and I wore my last year's best suit and a hat and collar. I sniffed the city smell, and declared, "Rather nice, just for a contrast. I've got an all-dressed-up-in-my-best feeling. Have you?"

"It is a lark," she smiled. "I never saw a city from the country point of view before. It seems queer to me—as if I didn't belong in it."

"You don't," said I; "you belong in the country."

She said nothing, but led me into a shop. It was a household-goods shop, and here we looked at dishes first. The woman who waited on us assumed a motherly air. It began to dawn upon me that she thought we were stocking our little prospective home. I shot a covert glance at the girl. Her eyes were twinkling, her colour high. I said nothing, but pointed to the dinner set I desired.

She laughed. "That's Royal Worcester," she said.

"What of it? I like it."

"Well, then, look at it all you can now," she answered, "for you can't have it."

The clerk laughed. "You see what you're in for, young man," she said, with the familiarity which rather too often characterizes clerks in our semi-rural regions.

I fear I coloured more than Miss Goodwin, which didn't help matters any.

"Please show us something at a reasonable cost," the girl said, with a curious, dignified severity, which was effective.

"That will do, won't it, Mr. Upton?" she presently asked, with pointed emphasis on the formal address, as a pretty set of dishes with a simple pattern on the edge was displayed for $25.

"Admirably," said I. "But I wanted the crimson and gold ones."

"Now for the kitchen things," said she, with her old smile again.

Here we made use of Mrs. Bert's list, and left our order to be filled. As we stepped out on the street, we looked at each other, and laughed.

"It's preposterous, but I suppose the evidence is against us," she twinkled.

"The evidence is against us, at any rate," I answered.

She looked away quickly, and said, "Where is the furniture store?"

We found it, and here we looked at iron beds for Mrs. Pillig and son Peter, and for one of the spare rooms so that I might have a guest up after college closed. She let me have the bed I wanted for the spare room, but the other two had to be plainer—or rather less plain, for the cheaper furniture is, the more jimcracky it appears to be. I asked the clerk why simplicity is always expensive, but he threw no light on the point. Next we bought a few cheap bedroom chairs, and a cheap bureau for Mrs. Pillig, and a better bureau for the spare room. I bought no other furniture, preferring to wait till I could get to New York or Boston, or better yet pick up old mahogany at country auctions, which I then believed in my ignorance was possible. Then we invaded the dry-goods shop, where again I stood helplessly by while the girl bought bedding and tablecloths and napkins and dishcloths and towels.

"I know you haven't any decent towels," she said,

"because you've been a bachelor so long, and sent 'em to laundries. I send mine to laundries, too. That's how I know."

I stood by helplessly, but not without emotion. Many emotions are possible to a man while watching a woman shop, the most common, perhaps, being impatience. Your average woman shopping is the epitome of irresolution, or so it seems to the man. She always explains the huge pile of goods, which she compels the poor clerk to heap on the counter, by an alleged desire to get the most for her money—though she almost invariably comes back to the first thing exhibited and buys that in the end. A mere man buys the first thing he likes then and there. But my companion was not the usual woman shopper. She wanted towels of a certain grade, for instance, inspected them, and if they were up to her standard bought them without further to-do. At my enthusiastic comments she smiled. "That's because it is your money I'm spending. I don't have to count the pennies!"

No, my emotion was not one of impatience. Indeed, I should have liked to prolong the process. It was one which only a man with his bachelor days fresh in mind can understand. It was the subtle thrill of being led helpless by a woman who is intent on providing him creature comforts which he could not arrange for himself, of seeing her purchase for him the most intimate of domestic necessities, and inevitably filling his mind

with thoughts of her in his establishment. If I were a woman and wanted to win a man, I should make him take me shopping when he needed new towels!

We finished in the dry-goods store at last, and I said, "I am sorry."

"Why?" asked the girl.

"Because," I answered, "with every purchase you make for me, you lay a new brick in the structure of our friendship—or a new towel!"

She turned her face quickly away, and made no reply.

Our next quest was for a sundial plate, but it was a vain search, for not a store in town carried such an article. As we came out of the last shop, she sighed. "Well, I can't spend any more of your money!" she said. "But I've really saved it for you. Goodness knows how much you'd have spent by yourself. Why, you wanted the most expensive kind of *everything!*"

"Of course," said I; "nothing is too good for Twin Fires."

"Well, it's lucky I was along, then."

"Lucky isn't just the word," said I. "I feel already as if Twin Fires was as much yours as mine."

Again she made no reply, except to ask when the train went back. But the train had long since gone back. It was nearly two o'clock, and we realized that we were hungry. So we gayly hunted out the hotel, and here I took command. "I'm going to order this lunch,"

I declared, "and the expense go hang. We'll have a regular spree, cocktails and all."

The hotel was really a good one, and the presence of several motor parties gave the café almost a metropolitan appearance. The change from Mrs. Bert's simple service to this was abrupt, and we were in the highest spirits. The cocktails came, and we clinked glasses.

"To Twin Fires!" said the girl.

"To the fairy godmother of Twin Fires!" said I.

Our eyes met as our glasses touched, and something electric passed between us. Then we drank.

"That is my first cocktail," she laughed, as she set her glass down.

"Heavens!" I exclaimed, "and we in a public place!"

It was my first since I came to Bentford, and we both enjoyed the luxury of dissipation, and laughed brazenly at our enjoyment. Then the lunch came, and we enjoyed that, and then we caught a train, and half an hour later were walking toward the farm. We passed the golf links on the way, at the end of the beautiful, elm-hung main street of Bentford, and saw players striding over the green turf along the winding river.

"Quick, drag me past!" I cried. "Oh, Lord, lead us not into temptation!"

"Haven't you joined yet?" she asked.

"No, I don't dare. I shan't join till the farm is in running order. The game is like Brand's conscience, it demands all or nothing."

"You men are dreadful babies about your sports," she said.

"Yes'm," I replied, "quite so. We haven't the firm-mindedness of your sex, about bridge, for instance."

"I never played a game of bridge in my life," said she indignantly.

"I wasn't thinking of you, but your sex," I answered.

"You find a difference?"

"Decidedly."

"That is just what Sentimental Tommy told every woman he met."

"Except Grizel—of whom it was true." I looked at her keenly, and she cast down her eyes.

"A farmer shouldn't talk in literary allusions," she said softly.

"Well," I laughed, "they've got me past the golf links!"

We reached Twin Fires, and walked out to see if the roses were all alive, though they hadn't had time to die. Then I went into the house to work, and she gathered a few sprays of lilac, and while I was settling down at my desk she arranged them in water and stood them on the mantels, humming to herself. Then she turned to go.

"Don't go," I cried.

She looked at me with a little smile, as if of query.

"It's been such a nice day," I added, "and it's so pleasant to feel you here in the house. Please strum something while I work."

"For ten minutes," she replied, sitting down at the piano. "Then I must work, too—horrid letters."

She rose presently, while I was scarce aware of it, and slipped out. I worked on, in silence save for the talk of the painters putting aside their brushes after the day's work. But I could smell the lilacs she had left, and the scent of them seemed like the wraith of her presence in the sunny room.

Chapter XIII

THE ADVENT OF THE PILLIGS

THE next day the painters left for good. Hard Cider had completed his tasks, Mike had no further need for his son Joe till haying time, and I no longer had an excuse for putting off my departure from Bert's and my embarkation upon the dubious seas of housekeeping with Mrs. Pillig at the wheel and son Peter as cabin boy. So I sent word to Mrs. Pillig to be ready to come the next morning, asked Mrs. Bert to order for me the necessary stock of groceries from the village, and gave myself up to the joys of transplanting. It was a cloudy day, with rain threatening, so that Mike assured me I could not find a better time. Miss Goodwin worked by my side, her task consisting of a careful perusal of the seed catalogue and a planting table. What colour were the flowers? How far apart should the plants be set? How tall did they grow? My ignorance was as profound as hers. But perhaps that added to the pleasure. It did to mine, at any rate. I was experimenting with the unknown.

I've set many a seedling since and needed no table to tell me how, but I have never recaptured quite the

glee of that soft, cloudy June morning, when my shiny new trowel transferred unknown plants to the flats on the wheelbarrow, and a voice beside me read:

"'*Phlox Drummondi.* This is one of the finest annuals, being hardy, easy of cultivation, and making as a summer bedding plant an effective and brilliant display. The flowers are of long duration and of most gorgeous and varied colours. One foot. One fourth ounce, special mixture; contains all the finest and most brilliant colours.' Wait, now, P—ph—phlox—my, this is like the dictionary! Here we are! Plant twelve inches apart. My goodness, if you plant all those twelve inches apart, you'll fill the whole farm! Where are you going to put them?"

"Why not around the sundial?" said I. "They appear to be low and of a superlative variety of brilliant colour. And they're an old-fashioned posy."

"Everything is superlative in a seed catalogue, I observe," she smiled. "Peter Bell could never have written a successful catalogue, could he? Yes, I think they'd be lovely round the sundial, with something tall on the outside, in clumps. Something white, like the pillar, to show them off."

We wheeled out the phlox plants and set them in the circular beds ringing the sundial, working on boards laid down on the ground, for my grass seed was sprouting, if rather spindly and in patches. Then we returned for something tall and white. Alas! we went over the

catalogue once, twice, three times, but there was nothing in my seed bed which would do! The stock was little higher than the phlox. White annual larkspur would have served, if there had been any—but there wasn't.

"It's the last time anybody else ever picks my seeds for me!" I declared. "Gee, I'll know a few things by next year."

"Gee, but you must fill up those sundial beds, *this* year," said she. "Oh, dear, I did want some tall clumps of white on the outside!"

"Well, here are asters. Asters are white, sometimes. See if these are. Giant comet, that sounds rather exciting. Also, débutante. They ought to be showy. Most débutantes are nowadays."

She scanned my box of empty seed envelopes. "Oh, dear, the giant comets are mixed," she said. "But"—with a look at the catalogue—"the débutantes are white. They grow only a foot and a half, but they are white."

"Well, they'll have to fox trot round the dial, then," said I.

I dug them up, and we put them in clumps in the irregularities on the outside edges of the beds, first filling the holes part full of water, as I had seen Mike do with the cauliflower plants.

"Let me do some," she pleaded. "Here I've been reading the old catalogue all the morning, while you've been digging in the nice dirt."

She kneeled on the board, holding a plant caressingly in her hand, and with her naked fingers set it and firmed it in the moist earth. Then she set a second, and a third, holding up her grimy fingers gleefully.

"Oh, you nice earth!" she finally exclaimed, digging both hands eagerly in to the wrists.

After dinner we spaded up little beds at the foot of each pillar of the rose arch, and put flowers in each of them, facing the house, set a row of *Phlox Drummondi* along the line where the grape arbour was to be, to mark more clearly the western edge of the lawn, and finally took a load of the remaining seedlings, of various sorts, down to the brook, just below the orchard, where I planned some day to build a pool and develop a lovely garden nook. Here the soil was black and rich for a foot or more in depth, and after spading and raking out the weeds and grasses we had four little beds, though roughly and hastily made, two on each side of the stream, with the future pool, as it were, in the centre. These we filled with the remaining seedlings, helter skelter, just for a splash of colour, and watered from the brook itself.

Then we straightened our stiff backs, and scurried for shelter from the coming rain. We reached Bert's just as the first big drops began to fall.

"Nice rain!" she cried, turning to look at it from under the porch. "You'll give all the flowers a drink, and they'll live and be beautiful in the garden of Twin Fires."

"Do you like flowers as well as philology, really?" I asked.

"I don't see what's to prevent my liking both," she smiled, as she disappeared up the stairs.

The next day it was still raining. I set off alone to make ready for the arrival of the Pilligs. I was standing on my kitchen porch talking to Mike when they arrived. It was a memorable moment. I heard the sound of wheels, and looked up. A wagon was approaching, driven by an old man. Beside him, beneath a cotton umbrella, sat a thin woman in black, with gray hair and a worried look. Behind them, on a battered trunk, sat Peter, who was not thin, who wore no worried look, and who chewed gum. Beneath the wagon, invisible at first, trotted a mud-bespattered yellow pup. The wagon stopped.

"Good morning, Mr. Upton," said Mrs. Pillig. "This is me and Peter."

"Where's Buster?" said Peter.

At the word Buster, the yellow pup emerged from beneath the cart, wagging the longest tail, in proportion to the dog, ever seen on a canine. It would be more correct to say that the tail wagged him, for with every excited motion his whole body was undulated to the ears, to counterbalance that tail.

I went out and aided Mrs. Pillig to alight, and then Mike and I lifted the trunk to the porch. I looked at the dog, which had also joined us on the porch, where he was leaving muddy paw marks.

"Do I understand that Buster is also an arrival?" said I.

"Oh, dear me, Mr. Upton, you must excuse me," Mrs. Pillig cried anxiously. "Mrs. John Barker's boy Leslie gave Buster to Peter a month ago, and of course I sent him right back, but he wouldn't stay back, and yesterday we took him away again, and this morning he just suddenly appeared behind the wagon, and I told Peter he couldn't come, and Peter cried, and Buster wouldn't go back, and I'll make Peter take him away just as soon as the rain stops."

"Well, I hadn't bargained on Buster, that's a fact," said I. I didn't like dogs; most people don't who've never had one. But he was such a forlornly muddy mongrel pup, and so eloquent of tail, that I spoke his name on an impulse, and put out my hand. The great tail wagged him to the ears, and with the friendliest of undulations he was all at once close to me, with his nose in my palm. Then he suddenly sat up on his hind legs, dangled his front paws, looked me square in the eyes, and barked.

That was too much for me. "Peter," said I, "you may keep Buster."

"Golly, I'd 'a' had a hard time not to," said that young person, immediately making for the barn, with Buster at his heels.

Mrs. Pillig and I went inside. While she was inspecting the kitchen, Mike and I carried her trunk up the back stairs.

"I hope your bed comes to-day," said I, returning. "You see, the house is largely furnished from my two rooms at college, and there was hardly enough to go around."

Mrs. Pillig looked into the south room. "Did you have all them books in your two rooms at college?" she asked.

I nodded.

"They must 'a' been pretty big rooms," she said. "Books is awful things to keep dusted."

"Which reminds me," I smiled, leading her over to my desk, at which I pointed impressively. "Woman!" said I, in sepulchral tones, "that desk is never to be dusted, never to be touched. Not a paper is to be removed from it. No matter how dirty, how littered it gets, *never touch it under pain of death!*"

She looked at me a second with her worried eyes wide open, and then a smile came over her wan, thin face.

"I guess you be n't so terrible as you sound," she said. "But I won't touch it. Anything else I'm not to touch?"

"Yes," I answered. "The ashes in those two fireplaces. *The ashes there are never to be taken out,* no matter if they are piled a foot thick, and spill all over the floor. A noble pile of ashes is a room's best recommendation. Those are the only two orders I have. In all else, I'm at your mercy. But on those two points you are at mine—and I have none!"

"Well, I reckon I'll wash the kitchen windows," said Mrs. Pillig.

I was sawing up a few more sticks from the orchard, when the express man drove up with the beds, the crockery, and so on. I called son Peter, who responded with Buster at his heels. "Peter," said I, "you and I'll now set up the beds. You ought to be in school, though, by the way. Why aren't you?"

"Hed ter bring maw over here," said Peter.

"That's too bad. Aren't you sorry?"

Peter grinned at me and slowly winked. I was very stern. "Nevertheless, you'll have a lesson," I said. "You shall tell me the capitals of all the states while we set up your bed."

Peter and I carried the beds, springs, and mattresses upstairs, and while we were joining the frames I began with Massachusetts and made him tell me all the capitals he could. We got into a dispute over the capital of Montana, Peter maintaining it was Butte, and I defending Helena. The debate waxed warm, and suddenly Buster appeared upon the scene, his tail following him up the stairs, to see what the trouble was. He began to leave mud tracks all over the freshly painted floor, so that we had to grab him up and wipe his paws with a rag. Peter held him while I wiped, and we fell to laughing, and forgot Montana.

"You'll have to get rubbers for him," said I.

This idea amused Peter tremendously. "Gee, rub-

bers on a dog!" he cried. "Buster'd eat 'em off in two seconds. Say, where's Buster goin' to sleep?"

We had to turn aside on our way downstairs for more furniture to make Buster a bed in a box full of excelsior in the shed. We put him in it, and went back to the porch. Buster followed us. We took him back, and put him in the box once more. He whacked the sides with his tail, as if he enjoyed the game—and jumped out as soon as we turned away.

"Gee, he's too wide awake now," said Peter.

So we fell over Buster for the rest of the morning. I never saw a dog before nor since who could so successfully get under your feet as Buster. If I started upstairs with the frame of a pine bureau on my back, Buster was on the third step, between my legs. If I was carrying in a stack of plates from the barrel of crockery, Buster was wedged in the screen door, pushing it open ahead of me, to let it snap back in my face. When I scolded him, he undulated his silly yellow body, sprang upon his hind legs, and licked my hands. If I tried to kick him, he regarded it as a game, and bit my shoe lace. Peter's shoe laces, I noted, were in shreds. But Buster disappeared after a time, and Peter and I got the china and kitchenware all in, and Mrs. Pillig had it washed and in the cupboards before he reappeared. He came down the front stairs with one of my bath slippers in his mouth, and, with a profoundly proud undulation of tail and body, laid it at my feet for me

to throw, barking loudly. We all laughed, but I took the slipper and beat him with it, while Peter appeared on the verge of tears.

"No, Buster," I cried. "You keep out of doors. Peter, put him out."

Peter resentfully deposited the pup on the porch, and took my slipper back upstairs. Meanwhile, Buster, after looking wistfully through the screen door a second, pushed it open with his nose and paw and reëntered, immediately sitting up on his hind legs and gazing into my eyes with the most human look I ever saw.

"Buster," said I, "you are the limit. Very well, stay in. I give up!"

Buster plopped down on all fours, as if he understood perfectly, and took a bite at my shoe string. I patted his head. I had to. The pup was irresistible.

"And what time will you have your dinner?" asked Mrs. Pillig. "There's no meat in the house. Guess you forgot to order the butcher to stop; but there's eggs."

"Eggs will do," said I, "and one o'clock. Bert has his at twelve, but I want mine at one. Maybe I shall have a guest."

"A guest!" she cried. "You wouldn't be puttin' a guest on me the first mornin'!"

"Well, it's doubtful, I'm afraid," I answered. "Perhaps I'll wait till to-morrow night, and have three guests for supper—just Bert and his wife and their

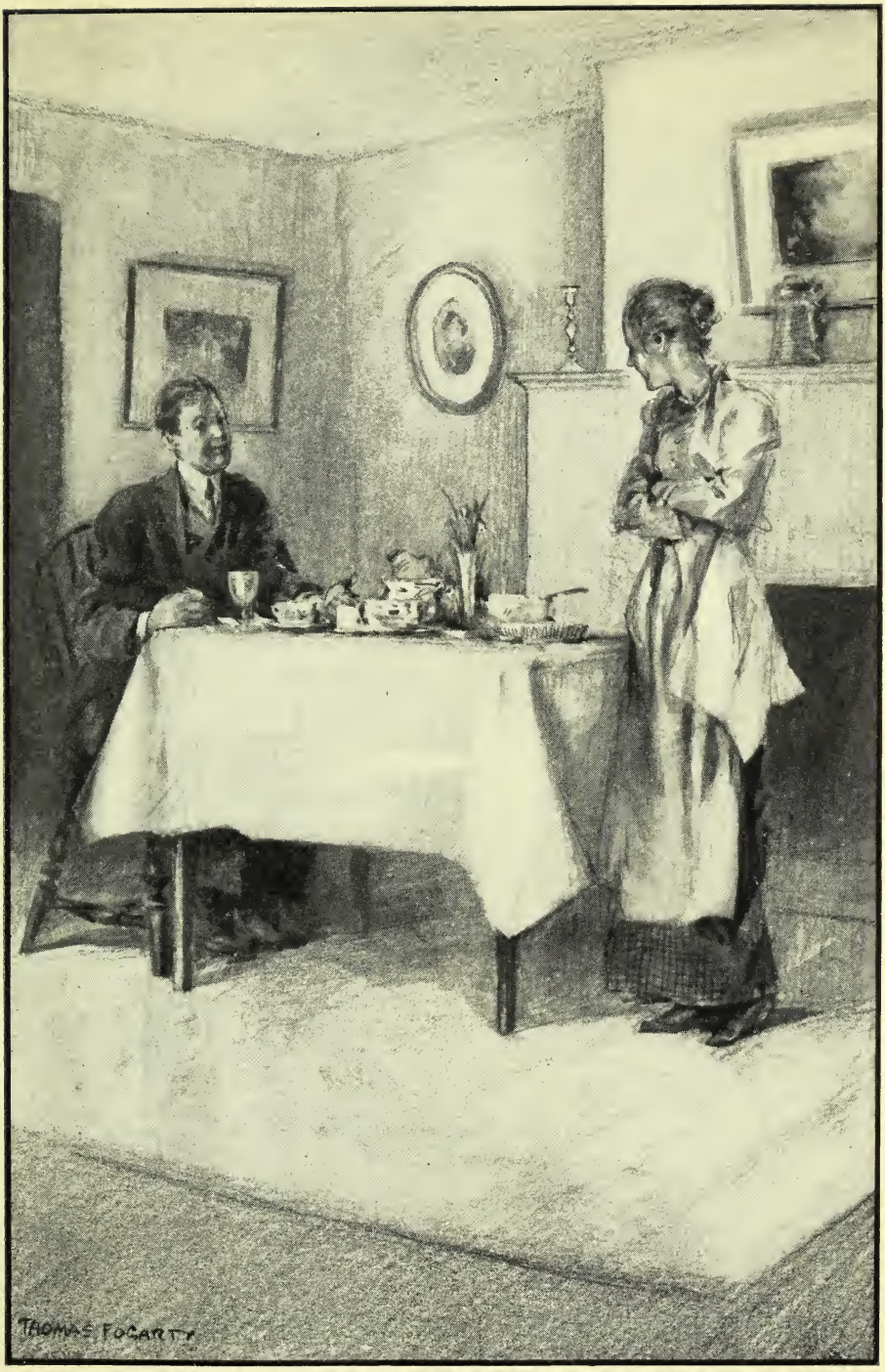
boarder—sort of a housewarming, you know. I want you to make a pie."

"Well, I reckon I can wait on table stylish enough for Mrs. Temple," said she, "and I'll make a lemon pie that'll make Bert Temple sorry he didn't marry *me*."

"I shouldn't want you to wreck Bert's domestic happiness," said I, "but make the pie, just the same!"

I went into the south room, and sat at my desk answering some letters, while I waited for dinner. I could hear the rattle of dishes in the kitchen—the first of those humble domestic sounds which we associate with the word home. Through the house, too, and in to me, floated the aroma of bacon and of coffee, faintly, just detectable, mingled with the smell of earth under June rain, which drifted through an open window. Presently I heard the front door open very softly. As I guessed that Peter had his instructions in behaviour from his mother, I knew it must be Miss Goodwin. My pen poised suspended over the paper. I waited for her to enter the room, in a pleasant tingle of expectation. But she did not enter. Several minutes passed, and I got up to investigate, but there was no sign of her. The front door, however, stood ajar. Then Mrs. Pillig called "Dinner!"

I walked into my dining-room, and sat down at the table, which was covered with a new tablecloth and adorned with my new china. Beside my plate was the familiar, old-fashioned silver I had eaten with when a



"Well, well, you've got yourself a bookay," she said

boy, and the sight of it thrilled me. Then I spied the centrepiece—a glass vase bearing three fresh iris buds from the brookside. Here was the secret, then, of the open door! Mrs. Pillig came in with the platter of eggs and bacon, and she, too, spied the flowers.

"Well, well, you've got yourself a bookay," she said.

"Not I," was my answer. "They just came. Mrs. Pillig, there's a fairy lives in this house, a nice, thoughtful fairy, who does things like this. If you ever see her, don't be frightened."

Mrs. Pillig looked at me pityingly. "I'll bring your toast and coffee now," she said.

The coffee came in steaming, and it was good coffee, much better than Mrs. Bert's. The eggs were good, too. But best of all was the centrepiece. She had come in so softly, and gone so quickly, and nobody had seen her! She had been present at my first meal in Twin Fires, after all, and so delicately present, just in the subtle fragrance of flowers and the warm token of thoughtfulness! My meal was a very happy one, happier even, perhaps, than it would have been had she sat opposite me in person. We are curious creatures, who can on occasion extract a sweeter pleasure from our dreams of others in loneliness than from their bodily presence. Mrs. Pillig fluttered in and out, to see if I was faring well, and though her service was not that of a trained waitress it sufficed to bring me dessert of some canned peaches, buried under my own rich

cream, and to remind me that my wants were solici tously cared for. Out on the porch I could see Peter playing with Buster and hear that ingratiating pup's yelps of canine delight. Before me stood the purple iris blooms, with golden hearts just opening, their slender stems rising from the clear water in the vase, and spoke of her whose thought of me was so gracious, so delicately expressed, so warming to my heart. The spoon I held bore my mother's initials, reminding me of my childhood, of that other home which death had broken up ten years before, since when I had called no place home save my study and bedroom high above the college Yard. I thought of the Yard—pleasantly, but without regrets. I looked through the window as my last spoonful of dessert was eaten, and saw the sky breaking into blue. I folded my new napkin, put it into the old silver ring which bore the word "John" on the side, failed utterly to note the absence of a finger-bowl, and rose from my first meal in Twin Fires.

"I have a home again," said I, aloud; "I have a home again after ten years!"

Then I went up the road toward Bert's.

Chapter XIV

THE FIRST LEMON PIE

MISS GOODWIN was not there. She had gone for a walk. Disappointed, I went back to my farm, and resolved to clean up the path through the pines, to surprise her. The grove was dripping wet, the brook high, and when I had stacked up the slash from as far as the tamarack swamp, I brought down some old planks from the house and made a walk with them over the wet corner. There was scarcely any slash in the open border of pines along the south wall, so that I had time to smooth with a rake the path on between the vegetables and the hayfield well back toward the house, mow it out with a scythe across the little slope of neglected grass just west of the house, where I was going some day to plant more orchard and place my chicken houses, and finally bring it down sharp through the group of pines by the road just northwest of the woodshed (evidently planted there for a windbreak), ending it up at the driveway which led in to the vegetable garden, around the end of the shed. Then I put up my tools, and walked back proudly around the circle. The path practically encompassed ten acres, so that it

made quite a respectable stroll. First, it led west through the small group of pines, then south along the wall by the potato field, where I glimpsed the rows of sprouting plants, and beyond them the lone pine and the acres of Bert's farm and the far hills up the valley. Then it led by the hayfield wall, on the right a tangle of wild roses and other wallside flowers and weeds, on the left the neat rows of my vegetables, with the peas already brushed. At the end of the farm it turned east, between two rows of pine trunks like a natural cloister, and finally entered the tamarack swamp, and then the hush and silence of the pine grove, where the brook ran along in its mossy bed and you might have been miles from any house. It emerged into the maples where Twin Fires was visible, spick and span with new white paint and green shutters, above its orchard. I was very proud of that path, of its length, its charm, its variety, its spontaneous character. It seemed to me then, and it has never ceased to seem, better than any extended acres of formal garden planting, more truly representative of the natural landscape of our country, and so in a truer sense a real garden. There are spots along that brook now where I have sown ferns and wild flowers from the deep woods, brought home, like the trilliums, in a grapevine basket, spots which for sheer exquisiteness of shadowed water and shy bloom and delicate green beat any formal bed you ever dreamed. I have even cleared out three trees

to let the morning sun fall on a little pool by the brook, and into that place I have succeeded in transplanting a cardinal flower, which looks at its own reflection in the still water below, across the pool from a blue vervain. Just one cardinal flower—that is all—under a shaft of sunlight in the woods. But it is, I like to think, what Hiroshige would most enjoy.

However, I am running ahead of my story. Returning to the house, I went up to my new chamber, where my striped Navajo blanket (a gift from a New Mexican undergraduate who had been in one of my courses and entertained an inexplicable regard for me, possibly because I persuaded him that he was not destined for a literary career) was spread on the floor, my old college bed was clean with fresh linen, and my college shingles hung on the walls, a pleasant reminder of those strange social ambitions which mean so much to youth. Through my west window streamed in the sunset. I peeled off my clothes and dove into my brand new and quite too expensive porcelain bath tub—a luxury Bert's house did not possess. Then I got into my good clothes and a starched collar, more for the now novel sensation than anything else, ate my supper, and in the warm June evening walked up the road.

Bert and his wife were in the front sitting-room. I could see them beneath the hanging lamp. The girl was walking idly up and down before the house. Out

of range of the open window I took her hand and gave it a little pressure. "For the centrepiece," said I. "You sat opposite me at my first meal, bless you!"

"Did I?" she answered. "What are you talking about?" She smiled it off, but I knew that she was pleased at my pleasure.

Then I led the way into the parlour. "Hear, ye; hear, ye; hear, ye!" I cried. "To-morrow night at seven a housewarming dinner-party will be given at Twin Fires. The guests will be Mrs. Bert Temple, her lesser fraction, and Miss Stella Goodwin."

"Land o' Goshen!" said Mrs. Bert. "I ain't got no fit clothes."

Bert and I roared. "They're all alike," cried Bert to me. "You ain't got no fit clothes, neither, hev you, Miss Goodwin?"

"Of course not," she laughed. "But I expect to go."

"Well, I ain't got no swaller tail myself," said Bert. "But I expect to go. We'll jest leave the old lady ter home."

"Will you, now?" said she. "Do you s'pose I'd lose a chance to see how Mrs. Pillig's feedin' our friend? Not much!"

"Seven o'clock, then!" I called, as I went back down the road, to light my old student's lamp again at last, and labour in my own house in the quiet evening, the time of day the Lord appointed for mental toil. As I

drew near, the form of Buster emerged from the shed, barking savagely, his bark changing to whimpers of joy as I spoke his name. He pleaded to come into the house with me, so I let him come, and all the evening he lay on the rug beside my chair, while I worked. Now and then I leaned to stroke his head, whereupon he would roll over on his back, raise his four paws into the air, and present his white belly to be scratched. When I stopped, he would roll back with a grunt of profound satisfaction, bat one eye at me affectionately, and go to sleep again.

"Buster," said I, "hanged if I don't like you."

His great tail spanked the rug.

The house seemed oddly more companionable for his presence. Yes, I did like him—I who had thought I hated dogs! I put him to bed at eleven, in the woodshed, and bade him good-night aloud.

The next day Mrs. Pillig was nervously busy with preparations for the feast. The ice man came, and the butcher. I worked half the day at my manuscripts, and half cleaning up the last of my orchard slash, mowing the neglected grass with a scythe, and trimming the grass between the house and the road with a lawn mower. I also edged the path to the kitchen door. Every few moments I looked up the road toward Bert's, but no figure drew near with saucily tilted nose. There was only Buster, trotting hither and yon in every part of the landscape, and, at half-past three, the chunky

form of Peter coming home from the Slab City school. I set Peter to work for an hour sawing wood.

"But I gotter study," he said.

"What?" said I.

"Spellin'," said Peter.

"All right," said I, "I'll ask you words while you saw."

He gave me his book which I held open on the lawn-mower handle, and every time the machine came to his end of the strip of lawn I asked him a new word. Then I'd mow back again, and he'd make another cut of apple bough, and then we'd have a fresh word.

"This lends an extremely educational aspect to agricultural toil, Peter," said I.

"Yes, sir," said he.

Peter had his lesson learned and I had the lawn mowed by five o'clock. I devoted the next hour to my correspondence, and then went up to make myself ready for the feast. For some reason I went into the spare room at the front of the house, and glancing from the window saw Miss Stella stealing up through the orchard, her hands full of flowers. I watched cautiously. She peeped into the east window, saw that the coast was clear, and I heard the front door gently opened. I tip-toed to the head of the stairs, and listened, She was in the south room. Presently I heard voices.

"Sh," she was cautioning, evidently to Mrs. Pillig. A second later I heard Buster bark his "stranger-coming!" bark by the kitchen door. When I came

downstairs, there were fresh flowers beneath the Hiroshiges, a bowl of them on the piano, and a centrepiece in the dining-room. I smiled.

"That fairy's been here again," said Mrs. Pillig slyly. "Gave me quite a start."

Promptly at seven my guests arrived, and I ushered them with great ceremony into the south room, where Mrs. Bert gazed around with unfeigned delight, and cried, "Well, land o' Goshen, to think this was them two old stuffy rooms of Milt's, with nothin' in 'em but a bed and a cracked pitcher! Hev you read all them books, young man?"

"Not quite all," I laughed, as I opened the chimney cupboard to the left of my west fireplace.

"Lucky you read what you did before you began ter run a farm," said Bert.

I now brought forth from the cupboard a bottle of my choicest Bourbon and four glasses. The ladies consented to the tiniest sip, but, "There's nothin' stingy about me!" said Bert. "Here's to yer, Mr Upton, and to yer house!"

We set our glasses down just as Mrs. Pillig announced dinner. On the way across the hall I managed to touch the girl's hand once more. "For the second centrepiece, dear fairy," I whispered.

Bert was in rare form that evening, and kept us in gales of merriment. Mrs Pillig brought the soup and meat with anxious gravity, set the courses on the table,

and then stopped to chat with Mrs. Temple, or to listen to Bert's stories. She amused me almost as much as Bert did. Bert and his wife weren't company to her, and the impersonal attitude of a servant was quite impossible for her. It was a family party with the waitress included. Miss Goodwin and I exchanged glances of amusement across the table.

Then came the lemon pie.

"Now there's a pie!" said Mrs. Pillig, setting it proudly before me.

I picked up my mother's old silver pie knife and carefully sank it down through the two-inch mass of puffy brown méringue spangled with golden drops, the under layer of lemon-yellow body, and finally the flaky, marvellously dry and tender bottom crust.

"Mrs. Pillig," said I, "pie is right!"

"Marthy," said Bert, smacking his lips over the first mouthful, "if you could make a pie like this, you'd be perfect."

"The creation of a pie like this," said I, "transcends the achievements of Praxiteles."

"If I could make a pie like this," said Miss Goodwin, "I should resign from the dictionary and open a bake-shop."

Mrs. Pillig stood in the doorway, her thin, worried face wreathed in smiles. Under her elbow I saw Peter peeping through, less curious concerning us, I fancied, than the fate of the pie.

"You lose, Peter," I called. "There ain't going to be no core."

At the sound of my voice Buster came squeezing into the room, and put his forepaws in my lap. Then he went around the table greeting everybody, and ended by nestling his nose against Miss Goodwin's knee. I slid back my chair, supremely content. Bert slid back his. I reached to the mantel for a box of cigars and passed one to Bert, along with a candle, for I had no lamp in the dining-room as yet, nor any candles for the table. That was a little detail we had forgotten. Bert bit off the end, and puffed contentedly.

"That's some seegar," he said. "Better'n I'm used ter. Speakin' o' seegars, though, reminds me o' old Jedge Perkins, when he went to Williams College. They used ter what yer call haze in them days, an' the soph'mores, they come into the young Jedge's room to smoke him out, an' they give him a dollar an' told him to go buy pipes an' terbacker; so he went out an' come back with ninety-nine clay pipes an' a penny's worth o' terbacker, an' it pleased the soph'mores so they let him off. 'Least, that's what the Jedge said."

We rose and went back into the south room, followed by Buster. Bert was puffing his cigar with deep delight, and sank into the depths of a Morris chair, stretching out his feet. "Say, Marthy, why don't we hev a chair like this?" he said.

"'Cause you can't stay awake in a straight one," she replied.

Mrs. Bert wandered about the room inspecting my books and pictures like a curious child. Miss Stella and I watched them both for a moment, exchanging a happy smile that meant volumes.

"I'm so glad you invited them," she whispered.

"I'm so glad you are here, too, though," I whispered back. "I can't think of my housewarming now, without you."

She coloured rosily, and moved to the piano, where, by some right instinct, she began to play Stephen Foster.

"'Old Kentucky Home!' By jinks, Marthy, do yer hear thet? Remember how I courted you, with the Salem Cadet Band a-playin' thet tune out on the bandstand, an' us in the shadder of a lilac bush?"

Martha Temple blushed like a girl. "Hush up, Bert," she laughed But she went over and sat on the arm of the Morris chair beside him, and I saw his big, brown, calloused hand steal about her waist. My own instinct was to go to the piano, and I followed it, bending over the player and whispering close to her ear:

"You've touched a chord in their hearts," I said, "that you couldn't have reached with Bach or Mozart. Don't stop."

"The old dears," she whispered back. "I'll give them 'The Old Folks at Home.'"

She did, holding the last chord open till the sound

died away in the heart of the piano, and the room was still. Then suddenly she slipped into "The Camptown Races," and Bert, with a loud shout of delight, began to beat out the rhythm on Martha's ample hip, for his arm was still about her.

"By cricky," he cried. "I bet thet tune beats any o' these new-fangled turkey trots! Speakin' o' turkey trots, Marthy, you and me ain't been to a dance in a year. We mus' go ter the next one."

"Do you like to dance?" asked Miss Goodwin, coming over to the settle.

"Wal, now, when I was young, I was some hand at the lancers," he laughed. "Used ter drive over ter Orville in a big sleigh full o' hay, an' hev a dance an' oyster stew to the hotel thar. Sarah Pillig wuz some tripper in them days, too."

"Ah, ha!" said I, "now I see why Mrs. Temple was so anxious to come to-night!"

"Stuff!" said that amiable woman.

The girl was looking into the ashes on the hearth. "Sleigh rides!" she said. "I suppose you all go jingling about the lovely country in sleighs all winter! Do you know, I never had a sleigh ride in my life?"

"No!" cried Bert. "Don't seem possible. Speakin' o' sleighs, did I ever tell you about old Deacon Temple, my great uncle? He used ter hev a story he sprung on anybody who'd listen. Cricky, how he did welcome a stranger ter town! 'Cordin' ter this story, he wuz

once drivin' along on a fine crust, when his old hoss run away, an' run, an' run, an' finally upset the sleigh over a wall into a hayfield whar they was mowin', an' he fell in a haycock an' didn't hurt himself at all. Then the stranger would say: 'But how could they be mowin' in Massachusetts in sleighin' time?' and the Deacon would answer: 'They wa'n't. The old mare run so far she run into Rhode Island.'"

Mrs. Temple rose. "Bert, you come home," she said, "before you think of any more o' them old ones."

"Oh, jest the woodchuck," Bert pleaded.

Miss Stella and I insisted on the woodchuck, so Bert sank back luxuriously, and narrated the tale. It had happened, it seems, to his grandfather and this same brother, the Deacon, when they were boys. "The old place wuz down by the river," said Bert, "an' there was a pesky 'chuck they couldn't shoot ner trap, he wuz so smart, who hed a burrow near the bank. So one day grandad seen him go in, an' he called the Deacon, an' the two of 'em sot out ter drown the critter. They lugged water in pails, takin' turns watchin' and luggin', for two hours, dumpin' it into the hole till she was nigh full up. Then they got too tuckered ter tote any more, an' sat down behind a bush ter rest. Pretty soon they seen the old woodchuck's head poke up. He looked around, careful like, but didn't see the boys behind the bush, so he come all the way out and what do you think he done?"

"Tell us!" cried Miss Stella, leaning forward, her eyes twinkling.

"He went down ter the river an' took a drink," said Bert.

"Won't you copy the wisdom of the woodchuck?" I asked, when the laugh had subsided.

Bert nodded slyly and I opened my chimney cupboard again.

"It's agin all laws," said Bert, pointing a thumb toward his wife, "but it ain't every day we hev a noo neighbour in these parts. Here's to yer, once more!"

The four of us walked up the road in merry mood, and the older folk left the girl and me on the porch. She held the door open, as if to go in after them, but I pleaded that the lovely June night was young. "And so are we," I added.

She looked at me a moment, through the dusk, and then came out on the stoop. We moved across the dewy lawn to a bench beneath the sycamore that guarded the house, and sat down. Neither of us spoke for a long moment. Then I said abruptly: "You've only come to my house wearing a fairy cap of invisibility, since I moved in—till to-night. Won't you come to-morrow and walk through the pines? I've cleared all the slash out for you, and put planks in the swamp. The thrush won't sing for me alone."

"Yes, I'll come—for the last time," she said softly.

"Why for the last time?" I cried.

"Because I'm going back to the I's, or the J's, on the day after," she answered.

"Oh, no, no, you mustn't!" I exclaimed. "You must stay here with the jays. Why, you're not strong enough, and New York will be horribly hot, and you haven't seen the phlox in bloom yet round the sundial, and you've got to tell me where to plant the perennials, when I sow them, and—and—well, you just mustn't go."

She smiled wistfully. "Pronunciation is more important for me than perennials, if not so pleasant," she said. "I shall think of Twin Fires often, though, in—in the heat."

"They'll arrest you if you try to wade in Central Park," said I.

She laughed softly, lifting the corners of her eyes to mine.

"Anyhow," I maintained, "you are not well enough to go back. You are just beginning to get strong again. It's folly, that's what it is!"

"Strong! Why, my hands are as calloused as yours," she laughed, "and about as tanned."

"Let me feel," I demanded.

She hesitated a second, and then put out her hand. I took it in mine, and touched the palm. Then my fingers closed over it, and I held it in silence, while through the soft June night the music of far frogs came to us, and the song of crickets in the grass. She did not attempt to withdraw it for a long moment. The night

noises, the night odours in the warm dark, wrapped us about, as we sat close together on the bench. I turned my face to hers, and saw that she was softly weeping. Strange tears were very close to my own eyes. But I did not speak. The hand slipped out of mine. She rose, and we moved to the door.

"The path to-morrow, at twilight," I whispered.

She nodded, not trusting to speech, and suddenly she was gone.

I walked down the road to Twin Fires in a dream, yet curiously aware of the rhythmic throb, the swell and diminuendo, of the crickets' elfin chime.

Chapter XV

A PAGAN THRUSH

ALL that next June day I worked in my garden, in a dream, my hands performing their tasks mechanically. I ran the wheel hoe between the rows of newly planted raspberries and blackberries, to mulch the soil, without consciousness of the future fruit which was supposed to delight me.

Avoiding Mike, who would have insisted on conversing had I worked near him, I next went down to the brook below the orchard, armed with a rake, brush scythe, and axe, and located the spot on the stone wall which exactly faced my front door. I marked it with a stake, and thinned out the ash-leaved maples which grew like a fringe between the wall and the brook, so that the best ones could spread into more attractive trees, and so that a semicircular space was also cleared which could surround the pool, as it were, and in which I could place a bench, up against the foliage, to face the door of the house. From the door you would look over the pool to the bench. From the bench you would look over the pool and up the slope through the orchard to the house entrance. After I had the bench site cor-

rectly located, I saw that the four flower beds which Miss Goodwin and I had made were at least four feet out of centre, and would all have to be moved. But that was too much of a task for my present mood. I left them as they were, and busied myself with rooting out undeniable weeds and carting off the slash and rubbish.

My mind was not on the task. Over and over I was asking myself the question, "Do I love her? What permanence is there in a spring passion, amid gardens and thrush songs, for a girl who caresses the sympathies by her naïve delight in the novelty of country life? How much of my feeling for her *is* passion, and how much is sympathy, even pity?"

Over and over I turned these questions, while my hands worked mechanically. And over and over, too, I will be honest and admit, the selfish incrustations of bachelor habits imposed their opposition to the thought of union. I had bought the farm to be my own lord and master; here I was to work, to create masterpieces of literature, to plan gardens, to play golf, to smoke all over the house, to toil all night and sleep all day if I so desired, to wear soft shirts and never dress for dinner, to maintain my own habits, my own individuality, undisturbed. What had been so pleasant, so tinglingly pleasant, for a day, a week—the presence of the girl in the garden, in the house, the rustle of her skirt, the sound of her fingers on the keys—would

it be always pleasant? What if one wished to escape from it, and there were no escape? Passions pall; life, work, ambitions, the need of solitude for creation, the individual soul, go on.

"All of which means," I thought, laying down my brush scythe and gazing into the brook, "that I am not sure of myself. And if I am not sure of myself, do I really love her? And if I am not sure of that, I must wait."

That resolution, the first definite thing my mind had laid hold on, came to me as the sun was sinking toward the west. I went to the house, changed my clothes, and hastened up the road to meet her, curiously eager for a man in doubt.

She was coming out of the door as I crossed the bit of lawn, dressed not in the working clothes which she had worn on our gardening days, but all in white, with a lavender ribbon at her throat. She smiled at me brightly and ran down the steps.

"Go to New York—but see Twin Fires first," she laughed. "I'm all ready for the tour."

I had not quite expected so much lightness of heart from her, and I was a little piqued, perhaps, as I answered, "You don't seem very sorry that you are seeing it for the last time."

She smiled into my face. "All pleasant things have to end," she said, "so why be glum about it?"

"Do they have to end?" said I.

"In my experience, always," she nodded.

I was silent. My resolution, which I confess had wavered a little when she came through the doorway, was fixed again. Just the light banter in her tone had done it. We walked down the road, and went first around the house to take a look at the lawn and rose trellis. The young grass was already a frail green from the house to the roses, the flowers around the white sundial pedestal, while not yet in bloom, showed a mass of low foliage, the nasturtiums were already trying to cling, with the aid of strings, to the bird bath (which I had forgotten to fill), and the rose trellis, coloured green by the painters before they departed, was even now hidden slightly at the base by the vines of the new roses.

"There," said I, pointing to it, "is the child of your brain, your aqueduct of roses, which you refuse to see in blossom."

"The child of my hands, too; don't forget that!" she laughed.

"Of *our* hands," I corrected.

"The ghost of Rome in roses," she said, half to herself. "It will be very lovely another year, when the vines have covered it."

"And it will be then, I trust," said I, "rather less like 'the rose of beauty on the brow of chaos.' The lawn will look like a lawn by then, and possibly I shall have achieved a sundial plate."

"Possibly you will," said she, with a suspicious twinkle. "And possibly you'll have remembered to fill your bird bath."

She turned abruptly into the house and emerged with a pitcher of water, tiptoeing over the frail, new grass to the bath, which she filled to the brim, pouring the remainder upon the vines at the base.

"My last activity shall be for the birds," she smiled, as she came back with the pitcher. As if in gratitude, a bird came winging out of the orchard behind her, and dipped his breast and bill in the water.

"The darling!" I heard her exclaim, under her breath.

We took the pitcher inside, and I saw her glance at the flowers in the vases. "I ought to get you some fresh ones," she said.

"No," I answered. "Those shall stay a long while, in memory of the good fairy. Now I will show you my house. You have never seen my house above the first story."

"It isn't proper," she laughed. "I shouldn't be even here, in the south room."

"But you have been here many times."

Again she laughed. "Stupid! But Mrs. Pillig wasn't here then!"

"Oh!" said I, a light dawning on my masculine stupidity, "I begin to realize the paradoxes of propriety. And now I see at last why I shouldn't have asked you to pick the paint for the dining-room—when I did."

Her eyes narrowed, and she looked into my face with sudden gravity. "I wonder if you do understand?" she answered. Slowly a half-wistful smile crept into the corners of her mouth, and she shook her head. "No, you don't; you don't at all."

Then her old laugh came bubbling up. "I suspect Mrs. Pillig is more of an authority on pies than propriety," she said in a cautious voice, "and, besides, I'm going away to-morrow, and, besides, I don't care anyway. Lead on."

We went up the uncarpeted front stairs, into the square upper hall which was lighted by an east window over the front door. I showed her first the spare room on the northeast corner, which connected with the bath, and then the second front chamber opposite, which was not yet furnished even with a bed. Then we entered my chamber, where the western sun was streaming in. She stood in the door a second, looking about, and then advanced and surveyed the bed.

"The bedclothes aren't tucked in right," she said.

"I know it," I answered sadly. "I have to fix them myself every night. Mrs. Pillig is better on pies."

The girl leaned over and remade my monastic white cot, giving the pillow a final pat to smooth it. Then she inspected the shingles and old photographs on the walls, turning from an undergraduate picture of me, in a group, to scan my face, and shaking her head.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Don't tell me I'm getting bald."

"No, not bald," she answered, "but your eyes don't see visions as they did then."

I looked at her, startled a little. "What makes you say that?" I asked.

"Forgive me," she replied quickly. "I meant nothing."

"You meant what you said," I answered, moving close to her, "and it is true. It is true of all men, and all women, in a way—of all save the chosen few who are the poets and seers. 'Shades of the prison house begin to close'—you know that shadow, too, I guess. I have no picture of you when you were younger. No—you are still the poet; you see aqueducts of roses. So you think I'm prosy now!"

"I didn't say that," she answered, very low.

"One vision I've seen," I went on, "one vision, lately. It was—it was——"

I broke abruptly off, remembering suddenly my resolve.

"Come," said I, "and I'll show you Mrs. Pillig's quarters."

She followed in silence, and peeped with me into the chambers in the ell, smiling a little as she saw Peter's clothes scattered on the floor and bed. Then, still in silence, and with the golden light of afternoon streaming across the slopes of my farm, we entered the pines by the

woodshed, and followed the new path along by the potato field and the pasture wall, pausing here and there to gather the first wild rose buds, and turning down through the cloister at the south.

As we slipped into the corner of the tamarack swamp my heart was beating high, my pulses racing with the recollection of all the tense moments in that grove ahead, since first I met her there. I know not with what feelings she entered. It was plain now even to me that she was masking them in a mood of lightness. She danced ahead over the new plank walk, and laughed back at me over her shoulder as she disappeared into the pines. A second later I found her sitting on the stone I had placed by the pool.

She looked up out of the corners of her eyes. "I should think this would be a good place to wade," she said.

"So it might," said I. "Do you want to try it?"

"Do you want to run along to the turn by the road and wait?" The eyes still mocked me.

"No," said I.

She shook her head sadly. "And I did so want to wade," she sighed.

"Really?" I asked.

"Really, yes. I won't have a chance again for—oh, never, maybe."

"Then of course I'll go ahead." I stepped over the brook, out of sight. A moment later I heard a soft

splashing of the water, and a voice called, "I'm only six now. Oh, it's such fun—and so cold!"

I made no reply. In fancy I could see her white feet in the water, her face tipped up in the shadows, her eyes large with delight. How sweet she was, how desirable! I stood lost in a rosy reverie, when suddenly I felt her beside me, and turned to meet her smile.

"How you like the brook," I said.

"How I love it!" she exclaimed. "Don't think me silly, but it really says secret things to me."

"Such secrets as the stream told to Rossetti?" I asked.

She looked away. "I said secret things," she answered.

We moved on, around the bend by the road where the little picture of far hills came into view, and back into the dusk of the thickest pines. At the second crossing of the brook, I took her hand to steady her over the slippery stones, and when we were across, the mood and memories of the place had their way with us, and our hands did not unclasp. We walked on so together to the spot where we first had met, and where first the thrush had sounded for us his elfin clarion. There we stopped and listened, but there was no sound save the whisper of the pines.

"The pines sound like soft midnight surf on the shore," she whispered.

"I want the thrush," I whispered back. "I want the thrush!"

"Yes," she said, raising her eyes to mine, "oh, yes!"

And then, as we waited, our eyes meeting, suddenly he sang, far off across the tamaracks, one perfect call, and silence again. Her face was a glimmering radiance in the dusk. Her hand was warm in mine. Slowly my face sank toward hers, and our lips met—met for an instant when we were not masters of ourselves, when the bird song and the whispering pines wrought their pagan spell upon us.

Another instant, and she stood away from me, one hand over her mouth, one hand on her panting breast, and fright in her eyes. Then, as suddenly, she laughed. It was hardly a nervous laugh. It welled up with the familiar gurgle from her throat.

"John Upton," she said, "you are a bad man. That wasn't what the thrush said at all."

"I misunderstood," said I, recovering more slowly, and astounded by her mood.

"I'll not reproach you, since I, a philologist, misunderstood for a second myself," she responded. "Hark!"

There was a sudden sound of steps and crackling twigs in the grove behind us, and Buster emerged up the path, hot on our scent. He made a dab with his tongue at my hand, and then fell upon Miss Goodwin. She sank to her knees and began to caress him, very quickly, so that I could not see her face.

"Stella," said I, "Buster has made a friend of you. That's always a great compliment from a dog."

She kept her face buried in his neck an instant longer, and then her eyes lifted to mine. "Yes—John," she said. "And now I must go home to pack my trunk."

"Let me drive you to the station in the morning," said I, as we emerged from the grove, in this sudden strange, calm intimacy, when no word had been spoken, and I, at least, was quite in the dark as to her feelings.

She shook her head. "No, I go too early for you. You—you mustn't try to see me."

For just a second her voice wavered. She stopped for a last look at Twin Fires. "Nice house, nice garden, nice brook," she said, and added, with a little smile, "nice rose trellis." Then we walked up the road, and at Bert's door she put out her hand.

"Good-bye," she said.

"Good-bye," I answered.

Her eyes looked frankly into mine. There was nothing there but smiling friendship. The fingers did not tremble in my grasp.

"I shall write," said I, controlling my voice with difficulty, "and send you pictures of the garden."

"Yes, do."

She was gone. I walked slowly back to my dwelling. I had kept my resolution. Yet how strangely I had kept it! What did it mean? Had I been strong? No. Had she made me keep it? Who could say? All had been so sudden—the kiss, her springing away, her abrupt, astonishing laughter. But she had not re-

proached me, she had not been righteously angry, nor, still less, absurd. She had thought it, perhaps, but the mood of the place and hour, and understood. That was fine, generous! Few women, I thought, would be capable of it. Stella! How pleasant it had been to say the name! Then the memory of her kiss came over me like a wave, and my supper stood neglected, and all that evening I sat staring idly at my manuscripts and stroking Buster's head.

Yes, I had kept my resolution—and felt like a fool, a happy, hopeless fool!

Chapter XVI

I GO TO NEW YORK FOR A PURPOSE

I SHALL not here recount the events on the farm during the weeks which followed Miss Stella's departure. They did not particularly interest me. My whole psychological make-up had been violently shaken, the centres of attention had been shifted, and I was constantly struggling for a readjustment which did not come. The post-office appealed to me more than the peas, and I laboured harder over my photographs of the sundial beds than over the beds themselves. I sent for a ray filter and a wide-angle lens, spending hours in experiment and covering a plank in front of the south door with printing frames.

I had written to her the day after she had departed, but no reply came for a week, and then only a brief little note, telling me it was hot in town and conveying her regards to the roses. I, too, waited a week—though it was hard—and then answered, sending some photographs, one of them a snapshot of a bird on the edge of the bath, one of them of Buster sitting on his hind legs. Again she answered briefly, merrily, con-

veying her especial regards to Buster, but ending with a plaintive little postscript about the heat.

I sat, the evening after this letter arrived, in my big, cool room, with Buster beside me, and thought of her down there in the swelter of town. I wanted to answer her letter, and wanted to answer it tenderly. I was lonely in my great, cool room; I was unspeakably lonely.

Suddenly it occurred to me that this was the evening of Class Day. The Yard was full of lanterns, of music, of shimmering dresses, of pretty faces, of young men in mortar boards and gowns. I might have been sitting in the deep window recess of my old room above the Yard, drinking in the scene with the pleasant impersonal wistfulness of an older man in the presence of happy youth. But I wasn't. I was sitting here alone with Buster, thinking of a poor girl in a hot, lonely New York lodging-house. I pulled my pad toward me and wrote her a letter. It read:

Dear, Nice Lady: I'm lying here on the rug, my tail quite tired after a hard day's work, looking up in Mr. John's face. His face is kind of glum and his eyes sort of faraway looking. I don't know what's the matter with him. He's been that way nights for two or three weeks now, which makes me sad, too; only he goes to the post-office often, which makes me glad, 'cause I love to walk or to run behind the buggy, and there's a collie pup on the way who is very nice. What do you suppose is the trouble? Sometimes he goes to the brook and sits on a stone by a pool there, while I go wading and get my stummick wet and drippy and cool. I wish you'd

come back. I didn't get to know you so awful well, but I liked you, and a house with just one glum, stupid man in it ain't—I mean isn't—very nice, 'specially as Peter's still at school. Schools last awful late up here.

I am yours waggishly—

"Here, Buster," said I. The pup rose and snuggled his nose into my lap. I picked him up, held his forepaw firmly and put some ink on it with the end of a match. Then I held the paper below it, pressed the paw down, and made a signature, wiping the paw afterward with a blotter. Buster enjoyed the strange operation, and wagged his tail furiously. I sealed and addressed the letter, and went to bed.

A few days later a box came addressed to Buster in my care. I opened it in Buster's presence, indeed literally beneath his nose. On top was a small package, tied with blue ribbon, and labelled "For Buster." It proved to be a dog biscuit, which the recipient at once took to the hearth and began upon. Beneath this was a note, which I opened with eager fingers. It began:

Darling Buster: Your waggish epistle received and contents noted. While most of us at times agree with him who said that the more he saw of men the better he liked dogs, nevertheless the canine intelligence is in some ways limited. Pray do not misunderstand me, dear Buster. In its limits lies its loyalty! No man is a hero to his valet, but every man to his dog. However, these same limits of the canine intelli-

gence, which logic compels me to assume that you also possess, are probably responsible for your mistake in assigning the term glumness to what you observe in Master John, when it is really lack of occupation. You see, dear Buster, he has got Twin Fires so far under way that he doesn't work at it all the time, so he ought to be at his writing of stories, made up of big dictionary words which I am defining or inventing for him down here in a very hot, dirty, dusty, smelly town. He isn't doing that, is he? Won't you please tell him to? Tell him that's all the trouble. He has a reaction from his first farming enthusiasm, and doesn't realize that the thing to do is to go to work on the new line, *his* line. For it *is* his line, you know, Buster.

Underneath this you'll find something to give him, with my best wishes for sunshine on the dear garden. I'd kiss you, Buster, only dogs are terribly germy.

STELLA.

P.S. That *is* a nice pool, isn't it?

I sat on the floor with the letter in my lap, smiling happily over it. Then I took the last package out of the box. It was heavy, evidently metal. Removing the papers, I held in my hand an old bronze sundial plate, a round one to fit my column, and upon it, freshly engraved, the ancient motto—

Horas Non Numero Nisi Serenas.

My first thought was of its cost. She couldn't afford it, the silly, generous girl! She'd bought it, doubtless, at one of those expensive New York antique shops, and then taken it to an engraver's, for further expense. I ought not acccept it. Yet how could I refuse? I

couldn't. I hugged it to my heart, and fairly ran to the dial post, Buster at my heels. It was already nearly noon, so I set it on the pedestal, got a level and a pot of glue, which was the only means of securing it to the post which I had, and watch in hand waited for the minute of twelve. At the minute, I set the shadow between the noon lines, levelled it with thin bits of match underneath, and glued it down. Then I stood off and surveyed it, sitting there in the sun—*her* dial! Then I ran for my camera.

I developed the film at once, and made a print that afternoon. When it was made, I went out into the vegetable garden, on a sudden impulse to work off physical energy, took the wheel hoe away from Mike, and began to cultivate.

Did you ever spend an afternoon with a wheel hoe, up and down, up and down, between rows of beets and carrots and onions, between cauliflower plants and tomato vines, between pepper plants and lettuce? It requires a certain fixity of attention to keep the weeders or the cultivator teeth close to the plants without also injuring them. But there is a soothing monotony in the forward pushes of the machine, and a profound satisfaction in seeing the weeds come up, the ground grow clean and brown and broken on each side of the row behind you, and to feel, too, how much you are accomplishing with the aid of this comparatively simple tool.

My early peas were ready for market. Mike announced that he was going to take the first lot over in the morning. They had been planted very late, but fortune had favoured them, and now they were hardly more than a week behind Bert's, which had been planted early in April. The foot-high corn was waving in the breeze, the long rows of delicate onion tops, of beets, carrots, radishes, and lettuce plants were as characteristically different as the vegetables themselves. I fixed their characteristics in my vision. I suddenly found myself taking a renewed interest in the farm. As I paused to wipe my bronzed forehead or relight my pipe, I would raise my head and look back over the rows, or through the trellis aqueduct to the house, seeing the sundial telling the hours on the lawn, and think of Stella, think of her down in the hot city, where I knew at last that I should not let her stay.

Yes, I had no longer any doubts. I wanted her. I should always want her. Twin Fires was incomplete, I was incomplete, life was incomplete, without her. I pushed the hoe with redoubled zeal, long after Mike had milked the cows and departed.

At six I stopped, amazed to find the plot of a story in my head. Heaven knows how it got there, but there it was, almost as full-statured as Minerva when she sprang from the head of Jove, though considerably less glacial. I even had the opening sentence all ready framed—to me always the most difficult point of story

or essay, except the closing sentence. Nor did this tale appear to be one I had incubated in the past, and which now popped up above the "threshold" from my subconsciousness. It was a brand-new plot, a perfect stranger to me. The phenomenon interested me almost as much as the plot. The tale grew even clearer as I took my bath, and haunted me during supper, so that I was peremptory in my replies to poor Mrs. Pillig and refused to aid Peter that evening with his geography.

"To-morrow," said I, vaguely, going into my study and locking the door.

I worked all that evening, got up at midnight to forage for a glass of milk and a fresh supply of oil for my lamp, and returned to my desk to work till four, when the sun astonished me. The story was done! Instead of going to bed, I went down in the cool of the young morning, when only the birds were astir, and took my bath in Stella's pool. Then I went to the dew-drenched pea vines and began to pick peas.

Here Mike found me, with nearly half a bushel gathered, when he appeared early to pick for market.

"It's the early bird gets the peas," said I.

"It is shurely," he laughed. "You might say you had a tiliphone call to get up—only these ain't tiliphones."

"Mike!" I cried, "a pun before breakfast!"

"Shure, I've had me breakfast," said he.

Which reminded me that I hadn't. I went in the

house to get it, reading over and correcting my manuscript as I ate. After breakfast I put on respectable clothes, tucked the manuscript in my pocket, and mounted the seat of my farm wagon, beside Mike. Behind us were almost two bushels of peas and several bunches of tall, juicy, red rhubarb stalks from the old hills we found on the place. Mike had greatly enriched the soil, and grown the plants in barrels.

"Well, I'm a real farmer now," said I.

"Ye are, shurely," Mike replied. "Them's good peas, if they was planted late."

We drove past the golf links and the summer hotel, to the market, where I was already known, I found, and greeted by name as I entered.

"I'll buy anything you'll sell me," said the proprietor, "and be glad to get it. Funny thing about this town, the way folks won't take the trouble to sell what they raise. Most of the big summer estates have their own gardens, of course, but there's nearly a hundred families that don't, and four boarding-houses, and the hotels. Why, the hotels send to New York for vegetables—if you can beat that! Guess all our farmers with any gumption have gone to the cities."

"Well," said I, "I'm not in farming for my health, which has always been good. I've got more than a bushel of peas out there."

"Peas!" cried the market man. "Why, I have more demands for peas than I can fill. The folks who could

sell me peas won't plant 'em 'cause it's too much trouble or expense to provide the brush. I'll give you eight cents a quart for peas to-day."

"This is too easy," I whispered to Mike, as we went out to get the baskets.

I sold my rhubarb also, and came away with a little book in which there was entered to my credit $4.16 for peas and $1.66 for rhubarb. I put the book proudly in my pocket, for it represented my first earnings from the farm, and mounting the farm wagon again told Mike to drive me to the hotel.

As we pulled up before the veranda, the line of old ladies in rockers focussed their eyes upon us.

"Shure," whispered Mike, "they look like they was hung out to dry!"

I went up the steps and into the office, where the hotel proprietor suavely greeted me, asked after my health, and inquired how my "estate" was getting on.

"You mean my farm," said I.

He smiled politely, but not without a skepticism which annoyed me. I hastened from him, and left my manuscript with the stenographer, who had arrived for the summer.

"I'll call for the copy to-morrow noon," said I. Then I went to the telegraph booth and sent a day letter to Stella. "Buster sending me to thank you," it read. "Meet me Hotel Belmont six to-morrow. Sold over a bushel of peas to-day. Prepare to celebrate."

"Mike," said I, returning to the cart, "drop me at the golf club. Tell Mrs. Pillig not to expect me to lunch."

It was ten o'clock when we arrived at the entrance to the club. I jumped out and Mike drove on. The professional took my name, and promised to hand it to the proper authorities as a candidate. Then I paid the fee for the day, borrowed some clubs from him, and we set out. I had not touched a club since the winter set in. How good the driver felt in my hand! How sweetly the ball flew from the club (as the golf ball advertisements phrase it), on the first attempt! I sprang down the course in pursuit, elated to see that I had driven even with the pro. Alas! my second was not like unto it! His second spun neatly up on the green and came to rest. Mine went off my mashie like a canon ball, and overshot into the road. My third went ten feet. But it was glorious. Why shouldn't a farmer play golf? Why shouldn't a golfer run a farm? Why shouldn't either write stories? Heavens, what a lot of pleasant things there are to do in the world, I thought to myself, as I finally reached the green and sank my put. Poor Stella, sweltering over a dictionary in New York! Soon she'd be here, too. She should learn to play golf, she should dig flower beds, she should wade in a brook. I flubbed my second drive.

"You're taking your eye off," said the pro.

"I'm taking my mind off," said I. "Give me a stroke

a hole from here, for double the price of the round, or quits?"

"You're on," said he.

I stung him, too! I felt so elated that I went back to the hotel for an elaborate luncheon, and returned for eighteen holes more. The feats a man can perform the first day after he has had no sleep are astonishing. The second day it is different. In fact, I began to get groggy about the tenth hole that afternoon, so that the pro. got back his losses, as in a burst of bravado I had offered to double the morning bet. He came back with an unholy 68 that afternoon, confound him! They always do when the bet is big enough, which is really why they are called professionals.

That night I slept ten hours, worked over my manuscripts most of the next morning, packed a load of them in my suitcase, and after an early dinner got Peter to drive me to the train, for his school had now closed.

"Peter," said I at the station, "your job is to take care of your mother, and keep the kindlings split, and drive to market for Mike when he needs you. Also to water the lawn and flower beds with the spray nozzle every morning. Mind, now, the spray nozzle! If I find you've used the heavy stream, I'll—I'll—I'll sell Buster!"

That amiable creature tried to climb aboard the train with me, and Peter had to haul him off by the tail. My

last sight of Bentford was a yellow dog squirming and barking in a small boy's arms.

The train was hot and stuffy. It grew hotter and stuffier as we came out of the mountains into the Connecticut lowlands, and we were all sweltering in the Pullman by the time New York was reached. As I stepped out of the Grand Central station into Forty-second Street my ears were assaulted by the unaccustomed din, my nose by the pungent odour of city streets, my eyes smarted in a dust whirl. But my heart was pounding with joy and expectation as I hurried across the street.

I climbed the broad steps to the lobby of the hotel, and scarcely had my feet reached the top than I saw a familiar figure rise from a chair. I ran toward her, waving off the boy who rushed to grab my bag. A second later her hand was in mine, her eyes upon my eyes.

"It—it was nice of Buster to send you," she said.

"You look so white, so tired," I answered. "Where is all your tan?"

"Melted," she laughed. "Have you business in town? It's awfully hot here, you poor man."

"Yes," said I, "I have business here, very important business. But first some supper and a spree. I've got 'most two bushels of peas to spend!"

We had a gay supper, and then took a cab, left my grip at my college club, where I had long maintained a

non-resident membership, and drove thence to Broadway.

"How like Bentford Main Street!" I laughed, as we emerged from Fourty-fourth Street into the blaze of grotesque electric signs which have a kind of bizarre beauty, none the less. "Where shall we go?"

"There's a revival of 'Patience' at the Casino," she suggested, "and there are the Ziegfeld Follies——"

"Not the Follies," I answered. "I'm neither a drummer nor a rural Sunday-school superintendent. Gilbert and Sullivan sounds good, and I've never heard 'Patience.'"

We found our places in the Casino just as the curtain was going up, and I saw "Patience" for the first time. I was glad it was for the first time, because she was with me, to share my delight. As incomparable tune after tune floated out to us the absurdest of absurd words, her eyes twinkled into mine, and our shoulders leaned together, and finally, between the seats, I squeezed her fingers with unrestrainable delight.

"Nice Gilbert and Sullivan," she whispered.

"It's a masterpiece; it's a masterpiece!" I whispered back. "It's as perfect in its way as—as your sundial! Oh, I'm so glad you are with me!"

"Is it worth coming way to New York for?"

"Under the conditions, around the world for," said I.

She coloured rosy, and looked back at the stage.

After the performance she would not let me get a cab.

"You've not that many peas on the place," she said. So we walked downtown to her lodgings, through the hot, dusty, half-deserted streets, into the older section of the city below Fourteenth Street. I said little, save to answer her volley of eager questions about the farm. At the steps of an ancient house near Washington Square she paused.

"Here is where I live," she said. "I've had a lovely evening. Shall I see you again before you go back?"

I smiled, took the latchkey from her hand, opened the door, and stepped behind her, to her evident surprise, into the large, silent, musty-smelling hall. She darted a quick look about, but I ignored it, taking her hand and leading her quickly into the parlour, where, by the faint light from the hall, I could see an array of mid-Victorian plush. The house was silent. Still holding her hand, I drew her to me.

"I am not going back—alone," I whispered. "You are going with me. Stella, I cannot live without you. Twin Fires is crying for its mistress. You are going back, too, away from the heat and dust and the town, into a house where the sweet air wanders, into the pines where the hermit sings and the pool is thirsty for your feet."

I heard in the stillness a strange sob, and suddenly her head was on my breast and her tears were flowing. My arms closed about her.

Presently she lifted her face, and our lips met. She

put up her hands and held my face within them. "So that was what the thrush said, after all," she whispered, with a hint of a happy smile.

"To me, yes," said I. "I didn't dream it was to you. *Was* it to you?"

"That you'll never know," she answered, "and you'll always be too stupid to guess."

"Stupid! You called me that once before about the painters. Why were you angry about choosing the dining-room paint?"

She grew suddenly wistful. "I'll tell you that," she said. "It was—it was because you let a third person into our little drama of Twin Fires. I—I was a fool, maybe. But I was playing out a kind—a kind of dream of home building. Two can play such a dream, if they don't speak of it. But not three. Then it becomes—it becomes, well, matter-of-facty, and people talk, and the bloom goes, and—you hurt me a little, that's all."

I could not reply for a moment. What man can before the wistful sweetness of a woman's secret moods? I could only kiss her hair. Finally words came. "The dream shall be reality now," I said, "and you and I together will make Twin Fires the loveliest spot in all the hills. To-morrow we'll buy a stair carpet, and—lots of things—together."

"Still with the pea money?" she gurgled, her gayety coming back. "No, sir; I've some money, too. Not much, but a little to take the place of the wedding

presents I've no relatives to give me. I want to help furnish Twin Fires." She laid her fingers on my protesting lips. "I shall, anyway," she added. "We are two lone orphans, you and I, but we have each other, and all that is mine is yours, all—all—all!"

Suddenly she threw her arms about my neck, and I was silent in the mystery of her passion.

Chapter XVII

I DO NOT RETURN ALONE

MANY people, I presume, long to fly from New York during a late June and early July hot spell. But nobody who does not possess a new place in the country, still unfurnished, with a garden crying for his attention and a brook wandering amid the pines, can possibly realize how the dust and heat of town affected me in the next ten days. It affected me the more because I saw how pale Stella was, how tired when the evenings came. With her woman's conscientiousness, she was struggling to do two weeks' work in one before leaving the dictionary. She even toiled several evenings, denying herself to me, while I wandered disconsolate along Broadway, or worked over my manuscripts at the club, surrounded by siphons of soda. At the luncheon hour and between five and six we shopped madly, getting a stair carpet, dining-room chairs (a present from her to herself and me, as she put it—fine Chippendale reproductions), a few rugs—as many as we could afford—and other necessary furnishings, including stuff for curtains. For the south room the curtains were gay Japanese silk from an Oriental store, to balance the

Hiroshiges, and while we were buying them she slipped away from me and presently returned, the proud possessor of two small ivory elephants.

"Look, somebody has sent us another present!" she laughed. "Folks are so good to us! These are to stand on the twin mantels, under the prints."

"From whom are they?" I asked.

"Your best friend and my worst enemy," she answered.

For three days after she left the office of the dictionary I saw little of her. "There are some things you can't buy for me—or with me," she smiled. Then we went down together to the City Hall for our license, sneaking in after hours, thanks to the kindly offices of a classmate of mine, the city editor of a newspaper. The clerk beamed upon us like a municipal Cupid.

That last evening she left me, to pack her trunks, and I went back to the club, and found there a letter from the magazine where I had submitted my story. It was a letter of acceptance! Misfortunes are not the only things which never come singly. I danced for joy. If the stores had been open I should have rushed out then and there and bought the mahogany secretary we had seen a few days before and wistfully passed by. Fortunately, they were not open.

In the morning my cab stopped in front of the old house near Washington Square, and Stella came forth

with a friend, a sober little person who appeared greatly impressed with her responsibilities, and bore the totally inappropriate name of Marguerite.

"Dear, dear!" she said, "I've never attended a bride before. It's very trying. And it's very mean of you, Mr. Upton, to take Stella from us, and leave me with a new and stupid co-worker. How do you expect the dictionary to come out?"

"I don't," said I, "nor do I care if it doesn't. There are too many words in the world already."

Bill Chadwick, another classmate of mine, came up from downtown, and met us at the church door. The rector was a friend and fellow alumnus of ours. It was like a tiny family party, suddenly and solemnly hushed by the organ as we stood before the altar, and in the warm dimness of the great vacant church Stella and I were made man and wife. The four of us went out to the cab again, and Bill insisted on a wedding breakfast at Sherry's.

"Good Lord!" he said, "you two gumshoe into an engagement, and get married without so much as a reporter in the church, and then expect to make a getaway like a pair of safe breakers! No, sir, you come with me, and get one real civilized meal before you go back to your farm fodder."

Bill had the solemn little bridesmaid laughing before the luncheon was over, but the last we saw of them they were waving us good-bye from behind the grating as

we went down the platform to our train, and the poor girl was mopping her eyes.

"Isn't the best man supposed to fall in love with the bridesmaid?" I asked. "At least I hope he'll dry her tears."

"Good gracious, yes!" cried Stella. "I never thought of that. You don't know what we've done! Marguerite is a dear girl and an excellent cross-indexer, but she's no wife for your gay friend William. You'd best send him a telegram of warning."

"Never!" said I. "Bill has cruised so long in Petticoat Bay as a blockade runner that I hope she shoots him full of holes and boards him in triumph. Besides, *everybody* ought to get married."

Stella's eyes looked up at mine, deep and happy below their twinkle, and we boarded the train.

The train started, it left New York behind, it ran into the suburbs, then into the country, and at last the hills began to mount beside the track, and a cooler, fresher air to come in through the windows. Still her eyes smiled into mine, but she said little, save now and then to lean forward and whisper, "Is it true, John, is it true?"

So we came to Bentford station, in the early dusk of evening, and the air was good as we alighted, and the silence. Suddenly Buster appeared, undulating with joyous yelps along the platform, and sprang at Stella's face. He almost ignored me.

Peter was waiting with the buggy. We sat him between us and drove home.

"Home—your home, our home," I whispered, pressing her hand behind Peter's back.

"Sold a lot o' peas and things," said Peter. "I got 'em all down in the book. Gee, I drove over 'most every day, an' I'm goin' to be on the ball team in the village, an' I wanter join the Boy Scouts, but ma won't let me 'less you say it's all right, an' ain't it?"

"We'll think it over, Peter," said I.

Stella was bouncing up and down on the seat with excitement as the buggy rattled over the bridge. Lamplight was streaming from Twin Fires. On the kitchen porch stood Mrs. Pillig, dressed in her best, and Mrs. Bert and Bert. As we climbed from the buggy, Bert raised his hand, and a shower of rice descended upon us. Stella ran up the path, and Mrs. Bert's ample arms closed about her. Both women were half laughing, half crying, when I got there with the grips.

"Ain't that jest like the sex?" said Bert, with a jerk of his thumb—"so durn glad they gotter cry about it!"

"You shet up," said Mrs. Bert. "For all *you* know, I'm pityin' the poor child!"

Mrs. Pillig had an ample dinner ready for us, with vegetables and salad fresh from the garden, and, as a crowning glory, a magnificent lemon pie.

"This is much better than anything at Sherry's," cried Stella, beaming upon her.

We sat a long while looking at each other across the small table, and then we wandered out into the dewy evening and our feet took us into the pines, where in the darkness we stopped by a now sacred spot and held each other close in silence. Then we went back into the south room.

"Oh, if the curtain stuff would only hurry up and come!" cried my wife.

"You must learn patience—Mrs. Upton," said I, while we both laughed sillily over the title, as others have done before us, no doubt. Presently Mrs. Pillig's anxious face appeared at the door. She seemed desirous of speaking, and doubtful how to begin.

"What is it, Mrs. Pillig?" I asked.

"Well, sir," she said, hesitantly, "I suppose now you are married you won't need me, after all." She paused. "I rented my house," she added.

"Need you!" I cried. "Why now I shall need you more than ever!"

She smiled faintly, still looking dubious. Stella went over to her. "What he means is, that I'm a poor goose who doesn't know any more about keeping house than Buster does about astronomy," she laughed. "Of course you'll stay, Mrs. Pillig, and teach me."

"Thank you, Miss—I mean Missus," said Mrs. Pillig, backing out.

"Be careful," I warned. "If you let Mrs. Pillig think you're so very green, she'll begin to boss you."

"That *would* be a new sensation," laughed Stella. "I like new sensations as much as Peter Pan did. Oh, it's a new sensation having a home like this, and living in the country, and smelling good, cool air and—and having *you*."

She was suddenly beside me on the settle. We heard Mrs. Pillig going up to bed. The house was still. Outside the choral song of night insects sounded drowsily. Buster came softly in and plopped down on the rug. We were alone in Twin Fires, together, and she would not rise to go up the road to Bert's. She would never go! So we sat a long, long while—and the rest shall be silence.

Chapter XVIII

WE BUILD A POOL

IT WAS the strangest, sweetest sensation I had ever known to wake in the morning and hear soft singing in the room where a fresh breeze was wandering. I saw Stella standing at the window, her hair about her shoulders, looking out. She turned when I stirred, came over to kiss me, while her hair fell about my face, and then cried, "Hurry! Hurry! I must get out into the garden!"

Presently, hand in hand, we went over the new lawn to the sundial which stood amid a ring of brilliant blooms—which, however, had become unbelievably choked with weeds in the ten days of my absence. The gnomon was throwing a long shadow westward across the VII. We filled the bird bath, which Peter had neglected. We hurried through the orchard to the brook, to see the flowers blooming there, and there, alas! we found the volume of the stream shrunk to less than half its former size. We ran to the rows of berry vines to see how many had survived, and found the greater part of them sprouting nicely; we went up the slope into the rows of vegetables and inspected them;

we rushed to see if all the roses were alive; we went to the barn where Mike had just begun to milk, and sniffed the warm, sweet odour.

"Yes, it's better for any mon to be married," I heard Mike saying to her, as I moved back toward the door. Then he added something I could not hear, and she came to me with rosy face. "The horrid old man!" She was half laughing to herself.

The goods we had ordered began to arrive after breakfast, Bert bringing them from the freight house in his large wagon. I took the day off, and devoted the morning to laying a stair carpet, probably the hottest job I ever tackled. Thank goodness, the stairs went straight up, without curve or angle! As I worked, small feet pattered by me, up and down, and garments from a big trunk in the lower hall brushed my face as they were being carried past—brushed their faint feminine perfume into my nostrils and made my hammer pause in mid-air. After the carpet was laid, there were a thousand and one other things to do. There were pictures of Stella's to be hung, and them we put in the hitherto vacant room at the front of the house, next to the dining-room, where Stella's wall desk was also placed, and a case of her books, and some chairs.

"Now I can work here when you want to create literature in your room, or I can receive my distinguished visitors here when you are busy," she laughed, setting some ornaments on the mantel. "My, but I've got a

lot of curtains to make! I never did so much sewing in my life."

Bureaus were carried upstairs with Mike's assistance, and the ivory backs of a woman's toilet articles appeared upon them; open closets showed me rows of women's garments; glass candlesticks were unpacked and set upon the dining-table, and the new dining-chairs "dressed up" the room remarkably. Everywhere we went Mrs. Pillig followed with dust pan and broom, slicking up behind us. When night came it was still an incomplete house—"Oh, a million things yet to get," cried Stella, "just one by one, as we can afford it, which will be fun!"—but a house that spoke everywhere of a dainty mistress. Outside, by the woodshed, was a pile of packing-boxes and opened crates and excelsior.

"There's *your* work, Peter," I said, pointing.

Peter looked rueful, but said nothing.

That evening I tried to work, but found it difficult, for watching my wife sew.

"You've no technique," I laughed.

She made a little *moue* at me, and went on hemming the curtains, getting up now and then to measure them. "Why should I have?" she said presently. "You knew I was a Ph. D. when you married me. These curtains be on your own head! I'm doing the best I can."

There was suddenly the suspicion of moisture in her eyes, and I ran to comfort her.

"I—I so want to make Twin Fires lovely," she added, pricking her finger. "Oh, tell me I can, if I am only a highbrow!"

Of course the finger had to be kissed, and she had to be kissed, and the hem had to be inspected and praised, and now, long, long afterward, I smile to think how alike we all of us are on a honeymoon.

It was the next morning that we resolved to begin the pool. "I don't expect to be married again for several years," said I, "and so I'm going to take a holiday this week. We'll carry the vegetables to market and bring back the cement, and begin on our water garden."

Mike loaded the wagon with peas, the last of the rhubarb, and ten quarts of currants picked by Peter, and off we started.

"What is this horse's name?" asked Stella, taking the reins to learn to drive.

"He has none, I guess. Mike calls him 'Giddup.'"

"No, it's Dobbin. He looks just like a Dobbin. He has a kind of conventional, discouraged tail, like a Dobbin. Giddup, Dobbin!"

The horse started to trot. "There, you see, it *is* his name!" she laughed.

On Bentford Main Street we passed several motors and a trap drawn by a prancing span, and all the occupants stared at us, or rather at Stella, who was beaming from her humble seat on the farm wagon more like an eighteenth century shepherdess than a New England

farmer's wife. We added over $3 more in the account book with the market, and read with delight the grand total of $40.80 already in two weeks.

"Next year," said I, "I'll double it!"

Then I spent the $3, and some more, for Portland cement.

We got into our oldest clothes when we reached home, I put on rubber boots, and we tackled the pool. Even with the brook as low as it was, the engineering feat was not easy for our unskilful hands. Peter soon joined us, and lent at least unlimited enthusiasm.

"Peter," said I, "you never worked this hard splitting kindlings."

Peter grinned. "Ho, I like to make dams," he said.

The first thing we did was to divert the brook by digging a new channel above the spot where we were to build the dam, and letting the water flow around to the left, close to one of the flower beds. Then, when the old channel had dried out a little, I spaded a trench across it and two feet into the banks on each side, and with Peter helping, filled the trench nearly full of the largest, flattest stones we could find, which we all then tramped upon to firm down. Then, a foot apart, we stood two boards on edge across the space, to make a mould for the concrete above the stones. I sent Peter with a wheelbarrow to pick up a load of small pebbles in the road, of the most irregular shape he could find, and I myself dug deeper in the hole where I had got the sand when

we built the bird bath, and brought loads of it to the brookside. We dumped sand, pebbles, and cement into a big box, one pail of cement to one pail of pebbles and three of sand, and Peter and Stella fought for the hoe to mix them, while I poured in the water from a watering-pot, for I had read and seen the reason for the fact that the success of the cement depends upon every particle being thoroughly mixed. As fast as we had a box full of mixture prepared, we dumped it into the mould between the boards. It took an astonishing quantity of cement —quite all we had, in fact—and to finish off the top smooth and level I had to get the quarter bag left from my orchard work and the bird bath. It was evening when we had it done, and Peter, who had deserted us soon after dinner to play ball, returned to beg us to take the boards away, and grew quite unreasonable when we refused.

That night there was a shower, and the brook rose a trifle. When we hastened down through the orchard after breakfast the new channel had curved itself still farther, as streams do when once they get started off the straight line, and had washed the southeast flower bed half away. Stella, with a cry of grief, ran down the brook into the pines, and came back with sadly bedraggled *Phlox Drummondi* plants in her hands, their trailing roots washed white, their blooms broken. "Horrid brook," she said. "Let's put it right back into its proper place. I don't like it any more."

"A sudden change of habit is always dangerous," said I. "Put the plants in the mud somewhere till we can set 'em in again."

We now took away the boards from the new dam, which had begun to harden nicely. The next thing to do was to stake out the pool above it. As the dam was 10 feet below the line between the proposed bench and the front door of the house, the other end of the pool was marked off 20 feet upstream, and between the two extremes we dug out the soil into an oval basin. This was easily accomplished by chopping out the turf with a grub hoe, and then hitching Dobbin to the drag scraper. The soil was a black, loamy sand, which came up easily, and was hauled over and dumped for dressing on the site of our little lawn beyond the pool. When we had the basin excavated to a depth of about a foot, all three of us (for Peter was once more on the job) scattered to find stones to hold the banks.

New England farms are traditionally stony—till you want stones. We ended by taking some here and there from the stone walls after we had scoured the pasture behind the barn for half a barrow load. When once the circumference of the pool had been ringed with stones, stood up on edge, we raked the bottom smooth, sprinkled clean sand upon it, and were ready to let the water against the dam as soon as the concrete hardened. We gave it one more day, and then shovelled away the temporary dam, filled up the new channel where it

turned out of the old, and stood beside the dam while the current, with a first muddy rush, swirled against it, eddied back, and began very slowly to rise.

"She holds, she holds!" I cried. "But we've forgotten to put stones for the water to fall over upon. It will undermine the structure if we don't."

"'Structure' is good," laughed Stella, regarding our little six-foot long and eighteen-inch high piece of engineering.

We shouted for Peter, and ran to the nearest stone wall, tugging back some flat stones which we placed directly below the dam for the overflow to fall on. Then, while Stella sat on the bank and watched the water rise, I shovelled some of the earth removed from the basin into the now abandoned temporary channel, and packed it down.

"Say, we can have fish in here," cried Peter, who was also watching the water rise.

"You can have a four-legged fish," laughed Stella, as Buster came down the bank with a gleeful bark and went splash into the pool, emerging to shake himself and spray us all.

I had scarce finished filling in the temporary trench, and was setting the poor uprooted plants back into the bed, with my back turned, when I heard a simultaneous shout from Peter and Stella.

"One, two, three—and over she goes!" cried Stella.

I faced around just in time to see the first line of the

water crawling over the top of the dam, and a second later it splashed on the stones below; behind it came the waterfall.

Stella was dancing up and down. "Oh, it's a real waterfall!" she cried. "I've got a real waterfall all my own! Come on downstream and look back at it!"

From the grove below it certainly did look pretty, flashing in the morning sun. "And when there are iris blossoms, great Japanese iris, nodding over it!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, can't we plant those right away?" she asked.

"No," said I. "Gardens are like Rome, I'm afraid."

We went back and surveyed our pool at close range. It was clearing now. But the second pile of earth remained to be removed from the west side. Peter and I carted that off in wheelbarrows at once, dumping part of it into the hole where we had dug the sand, and the rest into a heap behind some bushes upstream for future compost. Then we climbed the orchard slope for dinner. Midway we looked back. There glistened our pool, a twenty-foot brown crystal mirror, with the four flower beds all askew about it, the ragged weeds and bushes pressing them close, and beyond it only the rough ground I had cleared with a brush scythe, and the scraggly trees by the wall.

"Alas" said I, "now we've built the pool, we've got to build a whole garden to go with it!"

"But it tinkles! Hear it tinkle!" cried Stella.

We listened, hand in hand. The tiny waterfall was certainly tinkling, a cool, delicate, plashy sound, which mingled with the sound of the breeze in the trees above our heads, and the sweet twitterings of birds.

"Oh, John, it's a very nice dam, and a very nice world!" she whispered, as we went through the door. "And, after all, it seems to me the greatest fun of gardening is all the nice other things it makes you want to do after you've done the first one."

"That," said I sententiously, "is perhaps the secret of all successful living."

Chapter XIX

THE NICE OTHER THINGS

A POOL of water twenty feet long shining in the sun, or glimmering deeply in the twilight, that and nothing else save a few straggling annuals wrongly placed about it—yet it made Twin Fires over, it caused us weeks of toil, it got into our dreams, it got into our pockets, too.

"Now I know why sunken gardens are so called," said Stella, as she figured out the cost of the fall bulb planting we had already planned. "It's because you sink so much money in 'em!"

Of course there was little that we could do to the margin of the pool that summer, but there was plenty to do beyond the margin. The first thing of all was to place the flower beds differently. This took considerable experimenting, and Stella, being ingenious, hit upon a scheme for testing various possible arrangements. She filled all sorts of receptacles, from tumblers to pitchers, with cut flowers, low and high, and stood them in masses here and there, till the spot was found where they looked the best. As the pool centred on the line between the front door of the house and

the yet-to-be-built garden bench against the stone wall, and as the orchard came down to within forty feet of the brook on the slope from the house, it was something of a problem to lead naturally from a grassy orchard slope into a water feature and a bit of almost formal gardening, without making the transition stiff and abrupt. We finally solved it with the aid of a lawn mower, flower beds, and imagination.

Going over the grass between the last apple trees and the brook again and again with the mower, I finally reduced that section to something like a lawn, and also kept mowed a straight path from the pool up to the front door. Then, beginning just beyond the last shadows, we cut a bed, thirty inches wide, on each side of the line of the path, running parallel with it to within ten feet of the pool; then they swung to left and right, following the curve of the bank until they flanked the pool. By planting low flowers at the beginning, and gradually increasing their height till we had larkspur and hollyhocks and mallow in the flanking beds, we could both make the transition from orchard to water feature, and also screen off the pool, increasing its intimacy, without, however, hiding it from the front door, where it was glimpsed down a path of trees and flowers. Of course we had no flowers now in mid-July to put into those beds, save what few we could dig up from elsewhere, setting poor little annual phloxes two feet apart; but we could, and did, use them for seed beds for next

year's perennials, and to the eye of faith they were beautiful.

Now we were confronted by the problem of the other side of the pool, which included the problem of how to get to the other side! Stella suggested tentatively a tiny Japanese moon bridge above the pool, but I would have none of it.

"The only way to build a Japanese garden in New England is to utilize New England features," I insisted. "We won't copy anybody."

"All right," she answered, "then we want stepping-stones above the pool, and some more down below the dam, where we can see the waterfall."

"More suitable—and much easier," I agreed.

Once more we robbed the stone wall, building our two flanking paths of stepping-stones to the other side of the brook.

On the other side we decided to eliminate all flower beds in the open, merely planting iris and forget-me-not on the rim of the pool. We would clear out a wide semicircle of lawn, with the bench at the centre of the circumference, and plant our remaining flowers against the shrubbery on the sides, which was chiefly the wild red osier dogwood (*cornus stolonifera*). I got a brush scythe, a hatchet, a spade, a grub hoe, and a rake, and we went to work.

Work is certainly the word. It was not difficult to clear the brush and the tall, rank weeds and grasses

away from our semicircle, which was hardly more than thirty feet in diameter, but to spade up the black soil thereafter, to eliminate the long, tenacious roots of the witch grass and the weeds, to clear out the stubborn stumps of innumerable little trees and wild shrubs which had overrun the place, to spread evenly the big pile of soil we had excavated from the pool, to reduce it all to a clean, level condition for sowing grass, was more than I had bargained for. Stella gave up helping, for it was beyond her strength; but I kept on, through the long, hot July afternoons, and at last had it ready. The time of year was anything but propitious for sowing grass seed, but we planted it, none the less, trusting that in such a low, moist spot it might make a catch. Then we turned to the bench.

"Gracious, you have to be everything to be a gardener, don't you?" Stella laughed, as we tried to draw a sketch first, which should satisfy us. "The bench ought to balance the old Governor Winthrop highboy top of the front door. But I'm sure I don't know how we're going to make it."

"Patience," said I, turning the leaves of a catalogue of expensive marble garden furniture. "Just a simple design of the classic period will do. Colonial furniture was based on the Greek orders."

We found at last the picture of a marble bench which could be duplicated in general outline with wooden planking, so I telephoned to the lumber dealer in the

next town for two twenty-four-inch wide chestnut planks, and was fairly staggered by the bill when it came. It appears that a twenty-four-inch wide plank nowadays has to come from North Carolina, or some other distant point, and is rarer than charity, at least that is what they told me.

"I think it would be cheaper in marble," said Stella. "And it looks to me as if you could make the bench out of one plank."

"We want another bench on the sundial lawn," said I, wisely.

"You do *now*," said she.

"But if I hadn't got two planks," said I, "and had spoiled the first one, then we'd have had to wait two or three days again."

"Oh, that was the reason!" she smiled.

I sawed one of the planks into one six-foot and two two-foot lengths, and rounded the edges of the long piece for the top. Then, on the two short lengths, we carefully drew from the picture the outline of the supports on the marble original, and went to work with rip saw, hatchet, and draw knife to carve them out. The seasoned chestnut worked hard, and we were half a day about our task. The next day we put the three pieces together with braces and long screws, planed and sandpapered the wood till we had it smooth, and then painted it with white enamel paint. While the first coat was drying, we made a deep foundation of coal ashes and

flat stones for the bench to rest on, and the next afternoon, when the second coat, which Stella had applied before breakfast, was nearly dry, I hove the heavy thing on a wheelbarrow, and carted it around the road to the point where it was to go. We put a little fresh cement on the foundation stones to hold the two legs, and with Mike's aid the bench was lifted over the stone wall, through the hedge of ash-leaf maples, put in place, and levelled. Stella hovered near, with the can of paint, to cover our fingermarks and give the top a final glistening coat.

"There," I cried, as the job was done, "we have our pool and our garden bench! We have some of our flowers already planted for next year! We have our bit of lawn! Let's go up the orchard to the front door and see how it looks."

I left the wheelbarrow forgotten in the road, and we ran up the slope together, turned at the door, and gazed back. The pool shimmered in the afternoon sun. We could hear the water tinkling over the dam. Beyond the pool was the dark semicircle of fresh mould that was to be green grass backed by blossoms against the shrubbery, and finally, at the very rear, now stood the white bench, from this distance gleaming like marble.

"Fine! It looks fine!" I cried.

Stella's eyes were squinted judicially. "Oh, dear," she said, "I wish there was a cedar, a tall, slender, dark cedar, just behind the bench at either end. And, John,

do you know we ought to have some goldfish in the pool?"

I sighed profoundly. "You are a real gardener," said I. "Nothing is ever finished!"

"I'm afraid I am," she answered. "But we will have the goldfish, won't we?"

"Yes, and the cedars, too," I replied. "I'll ask Mike when is the best time to put 'em in."

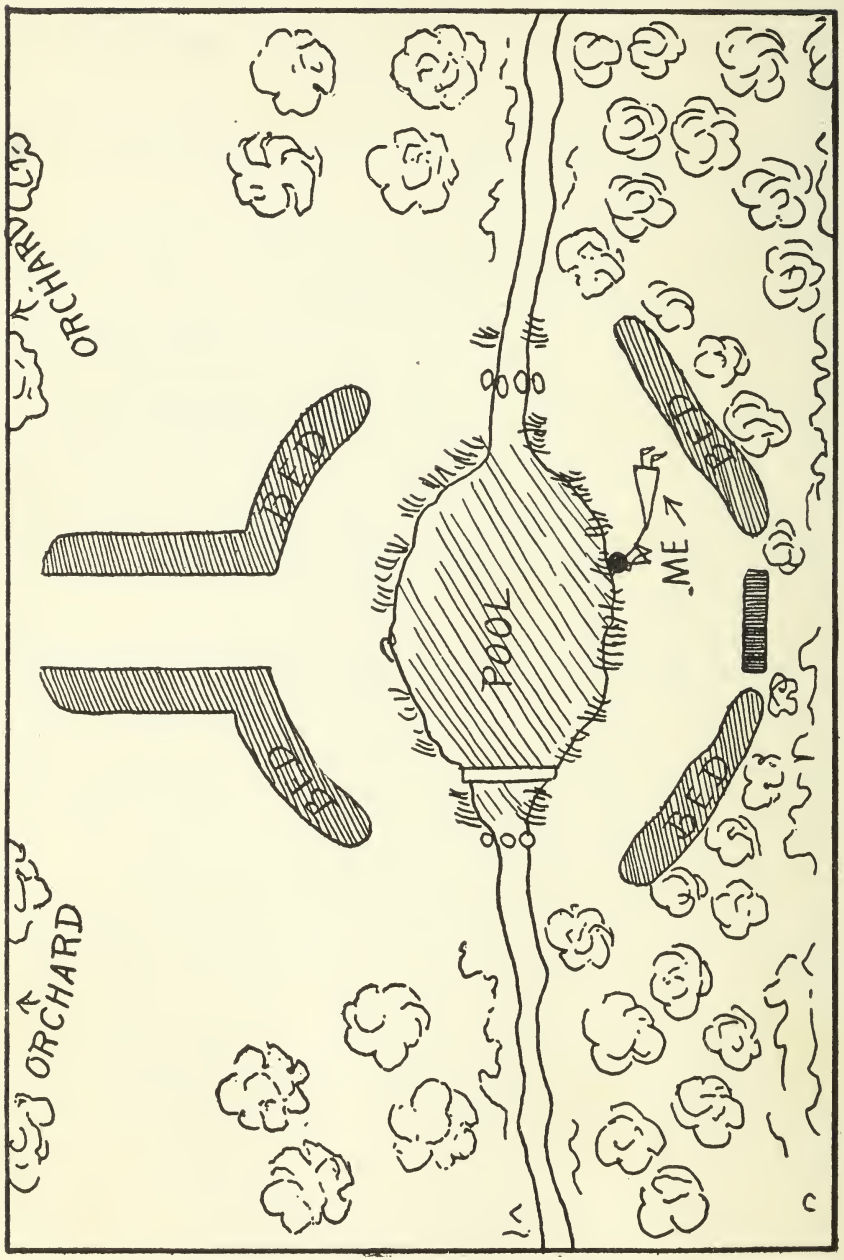
Mike was sure that spring was the best time, and there were some good ones up in our pasture.

"Oh, dear, spring is the best time for *everything*, it seems to me, and here it's only July!" cried Stella. "Well, anyhow, I'm going to draw a plan of the pool garden, and hang it over my desk."

She got paper and pencil and drew the plan, while I lay under an orchard tree listening to the tinkle of the waterfall and watching her while Buster came and licked my face.

The plan appears on the following page:

"I think your arrangement of iris on the edge is rather formal," I was saying, "and it would be rather more decorous, if not decorative, for you to sit upon the bench, and——" when we heard a motor rumble over the bridge at the brook, and the engine stop by our side door.


ORCHARD
POOL
ME
ORCHARD

Chapter XX

CALLERS

"HEAVENS!" cried Stella, leaping to her feet, "do you suppose it's callers?"

She looked ruefully at her paint-stained fingers, at her old, soiled khaki garden skirt which stopped at least six inches from the ground, and then at my get-up, which consisted of a very dirty soft-collared shirt, no necktie, khaki trousers that beggared description, and soil-crusted boots. Some passengers from the motor were unquestionably coming up our side path—they were coming around the corner by the lilac bush to the front door—they were around the lilac bush—they were upon us!

We looked at them—at a large, ample female in a silk gown anything but ample, at a young woman elaborately dressed, at a smallish man with white hair, white moustache, and ruddy complexion, clad in a juvenile Norfolk jacket and white flannels.

"They are coming to call!" whispered Stella. "The Lord help us! John, I'm scared!"

We advanced to meet them, and as I glanced at my wife, and then at the ample female, I was curiously

struck with their resemblance to a couple of strange dogs approaching each other warily. I fully expected to see the stout lady sniff; she had that kind of a nose.

"How do you do," said she. "I'm Mrs. Eckstrom. I presume this is Mr. and Mrs. Upton?"

Stella nodded.

"We are your neighbours," she continued, with an air which said, "You are very fortunate to have us for neighbours." "We live in the first place toward the village. This is Mr. Eckstrom, and my daughter, Miss Julia."

"We can hardly offer our hands," said Stella. "Will you forgive us? You see, we are making a garden, and it's rather messy work."

"You like to work in the garden yourself, I see," said Mrs. Eckstrom. "I, too, enjoy it. I frequently pick rose bugs. I pick them before breakfast, very early, while they are still sleepy. I find it is the only way to save my tea roses."

"The early gardener catches the rose bug—I'll remember that," Stella laughed. "Perhaps you would care to see the beginnings of our little garden?"

We moved down through the orchard and surveyed the pool. I suppose it did look bare and desolate to the outsider, who did not see it, as we did, with the eye of faith—the bare soil green with grass, the lip ringed with iris blades, the shrubbery bordered with a mass of



"We are your neighbours . . . you are very fortunate to have us for neighbours"

blooms. At any rate, the Eckstroms betrayed no enthusiasm.

"Mr. Upton spaded all that lawn up himself, and we made the bench together," cried Stella.

"Well, well, you *must* like to work," said Mr. Eckstrom. "It's so much simpler to sic a few men on the job. Besides, they can usually do it better."

Stella and I exchanged glances, and she cautioned me with her eyes. But politeness was never my strong point.

"Sometimes," said I, "it happens that a chap who wants a garden lacks the means to sic a few men on the job. Under those conditions he may perhaps be pardoned for labouring himself."

There was a slight silence broken by Stella, who said that we were going to get some goldfishes soon.

"We can give them some out of our pool, can't we, father?" the other girl said, with an evident effort to be neighbourly. "We really have too many."

"Certainly, certainly; have Peter bring some over tonight," her father replied.

"Oh, thank you!" Stella cried. "And will you have Peter tell us their names?"

"Their what?" exclaimed Mrs. Eckstrom.

"Oh, haven't they names? The poor things!" Stella said. "I shall name them as soon as they come."

"What a quaint idea," the girl said, with a smile. "Do you name all the creatures on the place?"

"Certainly," said Stella. "Come, I'll show you Epictetus and Luella."

This was a new one on me, but I kept silent, while she led us around the house, and lifted the plank which led up from the sundial lawn to the south door. Under it were two enormous toads and two small ones.

"Those big ones are Epictetus and Luella," she announced, "and, dear me, two children have arrived to visit them since morning! Let me see."

She dropped on her knees and examined the toads carefully, while they tried to burrow into the soil backward, to escape the sun. Our callers regarded her with odd expressions of mingled amusement and amazement —or was it pity?

"A son and daughter-in-law," she announced, rising. "They are Gladys and Gaynor."

A polite smile flickered on the faces of our three visitors, and died out in silence. Stella once more shot a glance at me.

We turned toward the house. "If you will excuse me for a few moments, I will make myself fit to brew you some tea," said my wife, holding open the door.

"That is very kind, but we'll not remain to-day, I think," Mrs. Eckstrom replied. "We will just glance at what you have done to this awful old house. It was certainly an eyesore before you bought it."

"I *liked* it all gray and weathered," Stella answered. "In fact, I didn't want it painted. But apparently

you have to paint things to preserve them. Still, the Lord made wood before man made paint."

"He also made man before man made clothes," said I.

A polite smile from the girl followed this remark. Her father and mother seemed unaware of it. They gave our beautiful living-room a casual glance, and the man took in especially the books—in bulk.

"You are one of these literary chaps, I hear," he said. "I suppose you need all these books in your business?"

"Well, hardly all," I answered. "Some few I read for pleasure. Will you smoke?"

I offered him a cigar.

"Thanks, no," said he. "Doctor's orders. I can do nothing I want to. Diet, and all that. Damn nuisance, too. Why, once I used to——"

"Father," said the girl, "don't you want to see if the car is ready?"

The look of animation which had come over the man's face when he began to talk about his ill health vanished again. He started toward the door.

"Let me," said I, springing ahead of him.

The car, of course, was waiting, the chauffeur sitting in it gazing vacantly down the road, with the patient stare of the true flunkey. I came back and reported. With a polite good-bye and an invitation to call and see their garden, our guests departed.

Stella and I stood in the south room and listened to

the car rumble over the bridge. Then we looked at one another in silence.

Presently she picked up what appeared like a whole pack of calling cards from the table, and glanced at them.

"John," she said, "it's begun. They've called on me. I shall have to return the call. Are all the rest like them, do you suppose? Are they all so deadly dumb? Have they no playfulness of mind? I tried 'em out on purpose. They don't arrive."

"They're rich," said I. "Almost all rich people are bores. We bored them. The old man, though, seemed about to become quite animated on the subject of his stomach."

Stella laughed. "I'm *glad* we were in old clothes," she said. "And aren't Epictetus and Luella darlings?"

"By the way," I cried, "why haven't I met them before?"

"I just discovered them this noon," she answered. "You were working at the time. I was saving them for a surprise after supper. I'm glad Gladys and Gaynor brought no grandchildren, though. It would have been hard to name so many correctly right off the bat, and it's terrible to start life with a wrong name."

"As Mike would say, it is surely," I answered. "That is why they were careful to call you Stella."

"Do you like the name?" she whispered, creeping close to me. "Oh, John, I'm glad we're not rich like

them"—with a gesture toward the pack of calling cards—"I'm glad we can work in the garden with our own hands and play games with toads and just be ourselves. Let's *never* be rich!"

"I promise," said I, solemnly.

Then we laughed and went to hear the hermit thrush.

Chapter XXI

AUTUMN IN THE GARDEN

I SPENT considerably more money in July and August. Some of the items would be regarded as necessities even by our rural standards; some my farming neighbours would deem a luxury, if not downright folly. I was a green farmer then; I am a green farmer still; but as I began to get about the region a little more that first summer, especially at haying time, I was struck with the absurd waste of machinery brought about by insufficient care and lack of dry housing, and I began to do some figuring. All my rural neighbours, even Bert, left their ploughs, harrows, hay rakes, mowers, and even their carts, out of doors in rain and sun all summer, and many of them all winter. A soaking rain followed by a scorching sun seemed to me, in my ignorance, a most effective way of ruining a wagon, of shrinking and splitting hubs, of loosening the fastenings of shafts even in iron machinery. Neither do rusted bearings wear so long as those properly protected. I began to understand why our farmers are so poor, and I sent for Hard Cider.

Just behind the barn he built me a lean-to shed,

about seventy-five feet long, open toward the east, and shingled rainproof. It cost me $500, but every night every piece of farm machinery and every farm wagon went under it, and the mowing-machine was further covered with a tarpaulin. For more than a year my shed was the only one of the kind in Bentford, and that next winter I used to see machinery standing behind barns, half buried in snow and ice, going to pieces for want of care. I verily believe that the New England farmer of to-day is the most shiftless mortal north of the Mason and Dixon line—and he hasn't hookworm for an excuse.

My next expenditure was for a cement root cellar, which scarcely needs defence, as I had no silo on the barn, and it would not pay to install one for only two cows. But the third item filled Mike with scorn. I had been making him milk the cows out of doors for some weeks, taking a tip from one of the big estates, and keeping an eye on him to see that he washed his hands properly and put on one of the white milking coats I had purchased. His utter contempt for that white rig was comical, but when I told him that I was going to have a cork and asphalt brick floor laid in the cow shed, he was speechless. He had endured the white apron, and the spectacle of the tuberculin test (the latter because the law made him), but an expensive floor in the barn was too much. He gave me one pitying look, and walked away.

The floor was laid, however, and when it was completed, and the drainage adjusted, Hard Cider trimmed up the supports of the barn cellar door and the two cellar window frames behind, and built in substantial screens. I didn't tell Mike about them till they were all in. Then I showed them to him, and told him he was to keep them closed under penalty of his job, and he was further to sprinkle chloride of lime on the manure once a week.

"Well, I niver seen screens on a barn before," said he, "and I guess nobody else iver did. Shure, it's to be spendin' your money azy ye are. Are yez goin' to put in a bathroom for the horse?"

Bert was almost as scornful of the screens as Mike, though he understood the cork-asphalt floor, having, in fact, unconsciously persuaded me to install it by telling me how the cows of a dairyman in the next town had been injured by slipping on a concrete floor. My floor had the advantages of concrete, but gave the cows a footing. There had never been screens on a barn in Bentford before, however, nor any chloride of lime used. This was too much for Bert. But Mrs. Bert was interested. After our screens had been on ten days and the barn cellar had been limed, Mrs. Pillig pointed out that the number of flies caught on the fly paper on the kitchen door had decreased at least 400 per cent. "And I think what's there now come down from your place," she added to Mrs. Bert. The next thing we

knew, Bert was talking of screening his stable. Truth compels me to admit, however, that he never got beyond the talking stage.

In the face of these expenditures, our garden expenses were a mere song, yet we had begun to plant and plan for the following year as soon as the pool was done. We knew we were green, and we did not scorn the advice of books and still more of our best practical friend—the head gardener on one of the large estates, who knew the exactions of our climate and the conditions of our soil.

"Plant your perennial seeds in as rich and cool a place as you can," he told us, "and expect to lose at least three fourths of your larkspur. When your foxglove plants are large enough to transplant, make long trenches in the vegetable garden, with manure at the bottom and four inches of soil on top, and set in the plants. Do it early in September if you can, so that they can make roots before our early frosts. Then you'll have fine plants for bedding in spring. If you buy any plants, get 'em from a nursery farther north if possible. They have to be very hardy here."

We went through the seed catalogues as one wanders amid manifold temptations, but we kept to our purpose of planting only the simpler, more old-fashioned blooms at present. In addition to the bulbs, which came later, we resolved to sow pansies, sweet William, larkspur, Canterbury bells, foxglove, peach bells, Oriental pop-

pies, platicodon, veronica, mallow (for backing to the pool especially), hollyhocks, phlox (both the early variety, the divaricata, blooming in May, and, of course, the standard decussata. The May phlox we secured in plants). All these seeds were carefully planted in the new beds between the pool and the orchard, where we could water them plentifully, and Stella, with the instincts of the true gardener, babied and tended those seedlings almost as if they were human. Without her care, probably, they would never have pulled through the dry, hot weeks which followed.

We used to walk down to see them every morning after breakfast, when Stella watered them, dipping the water from the pool and sending Antony and Cleopatra scurrying. Antony and Cleopatra were the goldfish which the Eckstroms, true to their promise, had sent us. The poor things were unnamed when they arrived, but their aspect—the one dark and sinuous, the other pompously golden—betrayed their identity. Stella called a few days after their arrival, to convey our thanks —carefully waiting till she saw the Eckstroms driving out in their car! Their curiosity having been satisfied regarding us, and our thanks having been rendered to them, further intercourse lapsed. We have never tried to maintain relations with those of our neighbours who bore us, or with whom we have nothing in common. Life is too short.

Not only did Stella water the seedlings religiously,

but she kept the soil mulched and the weeds out, working with her gloved hands in the earth. All the seeds came up well save the phlox, with which we had small luck, and the *Papaver Orientalis*, with which we had no luck at all. Not a seed came up, and not a seed ever has come up in our soil. We have had to beg the plants from other people. Even as the gardener predicted, the tender little larkspur plants mysteriously died. We ringed them with stiff paper, we surrounded them with coal ashes, we even sprayed them with Bordeaux and arsenate of lead. But still they were devoured at the roots or the tops, or mysteriously gave up the ghost with no apparent cause. We started with two hundred, and when autumn came we had just thirty left.

"Still," said Stella cheerfully, "thirty will make quite a brave show."

"If they survive the winter," said I gloomily. "I've not the patience to be a gardener."

"It *is* a good deal like reform!" Stella replied.

As the busy autumn days came upon us, Twin Fires took on a new aspect, and one to us greenhorns indescribably thrilling. In the first place, our field of corn rustled perpetually as we walked past it, and down in the greenish-golden lanes beneath we could see the orange gleam of pungkins (I shall so spell the word lest it be mispronounced by the ignorant). Great ears of the Stowell's evergreen were ripe, for Mike's prediction

about the early frost had not come true, and we ate the succulent food clean to the cob every day at dinner, besides selling many dozens of ears to the market. In the long light of afternoon, Stella loved to go along the path by the hayfield wall and then turn in amid the corn, losing sight at once of all the universe and wandering in a new world of rustling leaves. She felt, she said, just as Alice must have felt after she had eaten the cake; and once a rabbit bounded across her foot, to her unspeakable delight. She looked to see if he had dropped his gloves!

Then there was the potato field. We were eating our own new potatoes now. Often Stella dug them.

"It seems so funny to go and dig up a potato," she declared. "I've always felt that potatoes *just were.* But to see the whole process of growth is quite another matter. Oh, John, it makes them so much nicer!"

"Especially when you are getting seventy-five cents a bushel for them," I laughed.

The loaded tomato vines, too, with the red fruit hanging out from the wire frames and sending a pungent odour into the surrounding air, appealed to Stella endlessly. I used to see her now and then, as I glanced from the south room of a morning, eating a raw tomato like an apple, her head bent forward so that the juice would not spoil her dress.

And there were the apples! Already a red astrachan tree invited us on every trip to the brook, and other old

trees were bearing fast reddening fruit. I had wanted to set out more orchard, but we agreed that we could not afford it that year, if we were to build chicken houses against the spring, so I reluctantly gave up the idea. But our old trees, in spite of (or perhaps because of) my spring pruning, were doing fairly well. We had enough for baked apples and cream all winter, anyhow, Stella reckoned, smacking her lips at the thought.

Every day, on our way to the pool, one or the other of us took a hoe along and scraped a tree for five minutes, gradually getting the old bark off, and making a final preparation for a thorough spraying the next winter just so much easier. I used to prune a bit, too, in spare moments, so that by the end of the summer considerable renovation had been accomplished.

And now came the foxglove transplanting. According to the gardener's directions, we took two long rows where the early peas had stood (and where Mike had disobeyed my instructions to spade the vines under, that being a form of green manuring your old-time gardener will not see the value of, I have discovered), trenched them, put in manure and soil, and set out at least 300 foxglove plants six inches apart. It was a cool, cloudy day, and they stood up as though nothing had happened. Then, as an experiment, we moved scores of tiny hollyhocks from the crowded seed beds into their permanent position as a screen between the south kitchen windows and the sundial lawn, and as a

border on the west side of the same lawn. They, too, were quite unaffected by the change.

Meanwhile, we ordered our bulbs—hyacinths, daffodils (which in our climate refuse to take the winds of March with beauty, cowardly waiting till May), a few crocuses, *Narcissus poeticus*, Empress narcissus, German iris, Japanese iris, and Darwin tulips. We ordered the iris and tulips in named varieties.

"They have such nice names," said Stella, "especially the Japanese iris—Kimi-no-megumi, Shirataki, Momochiguma! The tulips are nice, too. Here is Ariadne and Kate Greenaway hobnobbing with Professor Rauwenhoff! What's the use of having plants that aren't named? We must show them as much respect as Antony and Cleopatra, or Epictetus and Luella!"

We also experimented with lilies—lemon lilies for the shady north side of the house, tigers for the border beyond the pool, and two or three of the expensive Myriophyllums, just to show that we, too, could go in for the exotic, like our neighbours on the big estates.

When the bulbs came, in October, we looked at the boxes sadly.

"Whew!" said Stella, "you can't be lazy and have a garden, can you?"

"I don't work to-morrow, I guess," said I. "Shall we ask Mike's Joe to help us?"

"Never!" said my wife. "We'll put these bulbs in

ourselves. If I had any help, I should feel like the Eckstroms, which God forbid!"

So the next day at seven-thirty we began. We ringed the pool with German and Japanese iris, alternated for succession, and planted a few Japanese both below and above the pool, close to the brook. We set the *Narcissus poeticus* bulbs where, if they grew, the flowers could look at themselves in the mirror below the dam. The Empress narcissus we placed on both sides of the pool just beyond the iris. On each side of the bench we placed a bulb of our precious Myriophyllums, and put the tigers into the borders close to the shrubbery on both sides. The hyacinths went into the sundial beds, the Darwins into the beds at the base of the rose aqueduct, a few crocuses into the sundial lawn, and the daffodils here and there all over the place, where the fancy struck us and the ground invited.

"Now, I'm going to label everything, and put it on a map besides," cried Stella, "except the daffodils. I want to forget where they are. I want surprises in the spring. Oh, John, do you suppose they'll come up?"

"Yes, I suppose they will," I laughed, "some of them. But do you suppose we'll ever get the kinks out of our backs?"

"I'm willing to go doubled up the rest of my life, for a garden of daffodils all my own," she cried.

"'And then my heart with pleasure thrills
And dances with the daffodils——'

It was very thoughtful of old Wordsworth, and Shakespeare, and Masefield, and all the rest to write nice things about the daffodils, wasn't it, John? I wonder if gardens would be so wonderful if it weren't for all their literary suggestions, and the lovely things they remind you of? Gardens have so much atmosphere! Oh, spring, spring, hurry and come!"

I forgot my lame back in her enthusiasm, and later, when the apples were gathered, the potatoes dug, the beets and carrots in the root cellar, our own sweet cider foamed in a glass pitcher on our table, and the first snow spits of December whistled across the fields, we put a little long manure over the irises and other bulbs, and pine boughs over the remaining perennials, and wrapped the ramblers in straw, with almost as much laughing tenderness as you would put a child to bed.

The cows were back in the stable, and Mike had revised his opinion of cork-asphalt floors when he realized the ease of cleaning with a hose; the potatoes and apples and onions and beets and carrots for our family use were stored in barrels and bins in the cellar, or spread on shelves, or buried in sand. The vegetable garden was newly ploughed, and manure spread on the hayfield. Antony and Cleopatra had been captured and brought into the dining-room, where they were to spend the winter in a glass bowl. Epictetus and Luella and Gladys and Gaynor had all burrowed out of sight into the ground. The pageant of autumn on our hills was

over, only an amethyst haze succeeding at sunset time. Wood fires sparkled on our twin hearths. The summer residents had departed. Our first Thanksgiving turkey had been eaten, though a great stone crock of Mrs. Pillig's incomparable mincemeat still yielded up its treasures for ambrosial pies.

"And now," said Stella, "I'm going to find out at last what a country winter is like!"

"And your friends are pitying you down in town," said I. "Don't you want to go back to them till spring?"

Stella looked at the fires, she looked out over the bare garden and the ploughed fields to the dun hillsides, she listened a moment to the whistle of the bleak December wind, she looked at me.

In her eyes I read her answer.

Chapter XXII

IN PRAISE OF COUNTRY WINTER

THOSE who know the country only in summer, know it scarcely at all. From the first November snow-storm to the last drift melting before the winds of late March on the northern side of a pasture wall, the winter season is a perpetual revelation of subtle colour harmonies, of exquisite compositions, of dramas on the trodden snow, of sweet, close-companioned hours before wood fires that crackle, shut into "a tumultuous privacy of storm."

Our first winter began one bleak November day when the lone pine in the potato field was outlined black against a gray sky, and over the long mountain wall to the northwest came suddenly a puff of white vapour, like the beginning of artillery fire, and then the shrapnel of the snow descended upon us. Wrapped against it, we ran about the farm, marvelling at the transformations it wrought. First it filled up the furrows on the ploughed land, making our field like a zebra's back. Then it whitened the sundial lawn, reminding us to take the wooden dial post in for the winter. Then it whitened the brown earth around the pool, where our July-sown

grass had failed to make a catch, and presently the pool was a black mirror on a field of white.

Then, as a crowning touch, it powdered the pines, and we ran among them. Under their thick shelter the wind was not felt. We could hear the flakes hissing against the needles overhead. All about us the white powder was sifting down. A peep into the outside world showed all distances blotted out by the storm. By evening the grove was a powdered Christmas card, the naked farm fields mantles of white laid upon the earth, the lamps in our house beacons of warmth gleaming behind us.

That snow melted, but others followed it, and by Christmas we were, as Mike put it, snowed in for the winter. In the barn was the warm smell of cattle. The motors had disappeared from our roads, and we went to the village in a pung, meeting other pungs on the way. It was as if we had slipped back a whole generation in time. Curiously enough, too, life became more leisurely, more familiar. The great summer estates were boarded up, the hotels closed. Only the real village people sat in church or waited at the post-office. We who in summer had known but few of our townsfolk now became acquainted with them all. We, too, left our pung in the horse sheds every Sabbath morning, listened to the nasal drone of the village choir, and joined in the social quarter-hour which followed the service. It was an altogether different world we

live in from the summer world, and we liked it even better.

What walks we had! Either with stout boots along the roads or with snowshoes into the deep woods, we took our exercise almost daily by tramping, and to us the countryside was a perpetual revelation. Almost the first thing which impressed us was the colourful quality of the winter landscape. Even on our own thirty acres that was apparent. At sunset of a still, peaceful day we could look forth from our south windows across the white lawn to the dark green pines and beyond them the exquisite iron-rust tamaracks, soft and feathery. The eastern sky would be mother of pearl at that hour, the southern sky blue, the western sky warm salmon, green, and gold, and the encircling hills a soft gray. Then, as the sun sank lower, a veil of amethyst would steal mysteriously into the feathery tamaracks and over the gray hills, all the upper air would blush to rose, and for a brief ecstatic ten minutes nature would sound a colour chord like a Mozartian andante.

Out on the roads we were charmed by the tawny tiger colour of the willow shoots and the delicate lavender of the blackberry vines rising from the snow beside a gray roadside wall. On the edge of the woods a white birch trunk, naked of leaves, would tell like a lightning stab against the wall of pines, while in the woods themselves, where the sunlight flickered through, the brook would wander black as jet beneath beautifully curved banks of

snow, and a laurel bush or fern would stand out a vivid green in a shaft of sunlight; or even a spot of brown leaves, where a pheasant or partridge had scratched, would disclose in its centre the vivid red of a partridge berry, a tiny woodland colour note that we loved.

And how close our wild neighbours came in the winter! We kept out a constant supply of suet and sunflower seeds on two or three downstair window ledges, and while we were dining, or reading in the south room, we could look up at any time and see chickadees or juncos or nuthatches just beyond the pane. The pheasants, too, came to our very doors in winter, leaving their unmistakable tracks, for they are walking birds and set their feet in a single line.

It was not long before we began to find tracks of four-footed wild things, a mink by the brook, a deer in the pasture, and finally a fox which, unlike Buster, tracked with one footprint in the other, leaving apparently but two marks. We followed him a long way on our snowshoes—up through our pasture and across Bert's to Bert's chicken house, and then out across the fields and into the woods. Stella had never tracked before, and she was as keen on the scent as a Boy Scout, reconstructing the animal's actions in her imagination as she went along. We lost the trail finally where it crossed a road, but we picked up deer tracks instead, and found a spot where they had eaten from the sumach

bushes, and another where they had pawed up the snow for frozen apples in an old abandoned orchard.

"Oh, if they'd only come into *our* orchard!" cried Stella.

It was not long afterward, one moonlight night, that I chanced to be sitting up late, and before retiring I glanced from the window. There was something—there were two somethings—moving about amid the apple trees. I looked closer and ran to awake Stella. Wrapped in a dressing-gown, she came with me to the window and peered out. There, in the full moonlight which flooded the white world with a misty silver radiance, were two deer pawing for apples in our orchard. Buster, by some sixth sense, suddenly scented them, and we heard him set up an alarm in the kitchen. The buck shot up his head and listened, a beautiful sight which made Stella gasp for breath. We heard the horse stamp in the stable, and Buster continued his yelps. But the buck was evidently satisfied of his safety, for he lowered his muzzle into the snow again. However, as we watched, there came a different sound to his ears, though not to ours, for suddenly he gave a leap, and with the doe after him took the stone wall at a bound, the wall across the road at another, and vanished up our pasture. A moment later we, too, heard the sound; it was the jingle of approaching sleigh-bells.

Stella sighed happily as she went back to bed. "All my dreams are coming true!" she whispered.

I wonder if any pleasure in this world is quite comparable with that of coming back to your own snug dwelling after a long tramp through the snowy woods, returning when the green sunset is fading in the west and the amethyst shadows are creeping up the hills and the cold night stillness is abroad, and seeing from afar the red window-squares of home gleaming over the snow? Our favourite method of return was to climb the stone wall by the frozen tamarack swamp and enter the pines, where the ice-covered brook crept like a flowing black ribbon through the white, with the snow on the banks curled over it in the most exquisite and fantastic of tiny cornices. We could see our south windows through the branches, just before the path emerged, and Mrs. Pillig had orders to light the lamps before our return so that they might glow a welcome. We always stood a moment, hand in hand, regarding them, before we climbed the slope and entered the door.

Ah, the warmth that greeted us when we stepped inside! The good smell of burning apple wood on the twin hearths! The cheerful bark of Buster, if he had not gone to walk with us! The prophetic rattle of dishes and the kettle song from the kitchen! We had a kettle of our own, too, now, in the long room. It hung on a crane in the west fireplace, and was delightfully black, and often made the tea taste smoky, like camp tea. Quickly we left our wraps in the hall, quickly Stella brought out cups and tea caddy to a little tab-

ouret before the western fireplace, and sitting on our settle in the chimney nook, with the last wan light of sunset competing with the evening lamps, we warmed our hands before the blaze, and drank our tea, and felt that delicious drowse steal over us which comes only after brisk exercise in the mountain air of winter.

And then the evenings, the long winter evenings by the twin fires, when we were supposed by our friends in town to be pining for the opera or the theatre, and were in reality blissfully unaware of either! Stella's first duty after supper was to hear Peter's lessons, while Buster lay on the hearth and I sprawled in a Morris chair with my cigar, and read the morning paper. That is another delightful feature of country life. You never have time to read the morning paper till evening, and then you read it comfortably all through, if you like. Peter was going far ahead of his class as a result of this individual instruction, and had actually begun to develop a real interest in the acquisition of knowledge—a thing that did not exist as a rule in the pupils of Bentford, which, perhaps, was not the pupils' fault. So far as I have observed, it is not characteristic of most of our public schools in America. Perhaps that is a penalty of democracy; certainly it is a penalty of too large classes and too low salaries paid for teaching. We make the profession of teacher a stop-gap for girls between the normal school and matrimony.

When Peter's lesson was over, and we were left alone,

we had the best books in the world, the best music in the world, to choose from. We could have a play if we liked, the kind too seldom seen on Broadway. We could have Mozart, or so much of him as Stella could render. We had letters to write, also, a task always left till evening. Sometimes I had tag ends of my morning labours to finish up. Any writing of my own I brought forth in the evening for Stella to read, and to criticise as mercilessly as she chose—which was sometimes very mercilessly; and we thrashed it over together. Sometimes, even, I agreed with her!

Once a week we gathered in several high school pupils who lived near by—Mike's Nora, a boy, and three other girls—and read Shakespeare. It took them two months to read one play in school, but we read a play in two or three evenings, each of us taking a part. I showed them pictures of the ancient playhouses, and explained as best I could the conditions of stage productions in various periods. Stella supplied the necessary philology. We had a real course in Shakespeare, and yet one which interested the children, for they were reading the plays aloud, and visualizing them. One evening we dressed up in costume, so far as we could, amid much laughter, and acted a scene from "As You Like It," with Nora as Rosalind (she wore my knickerbockers and a long cape of Stella's, and blushed adorably), and Mrs. Pillig and Peter called in as audience.

Before the winter was over, two or three other

children from the village had begged to come to the class, and made the long, cold trip out to the farm on foot every week. We had cake and chocolate when the lessons were over. As Stella and I stood in the door listening to the young voices die away down the road, we used to look at one another happily.

"Oh," she once cried, "how much you can do for folks in the country! In town we'd pay $4 to see Shakespeare, played by professionals, and then go selfishly home. Here we can help give him to these children, with all that means. And some of them so need it! Why, look at Joe Bostwick! When he first began to come he had the manners of a bear, and read like a seven-year-old child. I don't believe he'd *ever* read out loud, or been of an evening among nice people. Now he's getting to know how to behave in company, poor fellow, and he reads almost intelligently!"

"You don't want to go back to the city, then?" I smiled.

"Oh, John, I never want to go back to the city," she answered. "I want to live here forever. I want to do more and more for these people. I want to do more and more for Twin Fires. I want to know more and more what I've never known—the sense of being rooted to the land, of having a home. Our grandfathers used to know that, but in our modern cities we have forgotten. I want to die in the house I've always lived in."

"It's a little soon to plan for that," said I, as we

entered the south room again, but I knew what she meant.

The hour was late for us in the country—almost eleven. We put away the cups and plates, and went through our nightly ceremony of locking up. First, we peeped out of the window at the thermometer, which registered two degrees above zero, and I set it down in my diary, for the temperature and the weather are important items to record when you are a farmer. Then we locked all the doors, giving Buster a pat as he lay on his old quilt in a corner of the kitchen. The kitchen lamp was out, and the room was lighted only by the moon, but the kettle was singing softly. Then we returned to the south room and banked the fires carefully, so that the fresh logs would catch in the morning, on top of the noble piles of ashes. Finally we blew out the lamps. Cold moonlight stole in across the floor from the glass door and windows, and met midway the warm red glow from the fires. The world was very still. The great room, so homelike, so friendly, so full of beautiful things and yet so simple, seemed sleeping. We tiptoed from it with a last loving glance and climbed the stairs. In our dressing-room, which was an extra chamber, an open fire burned, but in our chamber there was no heat. The shades were up and the moonlight showed the fairy frost patterns on the panes. We took a last look out across the silvery world before we retired, a last deep breath of the stinging cold air as the win-

dows were opened, and jumped beneath the covering, with heavy blankets beneath us as well as above.

"It is a very nice old world," said Stella sleepily. "Winter or summer, it is lovely. I think New York is but a dream—and I hope it won't be mine!"

I heard her breathing steadily a few minutes later, and from far off somewhere in the outer world the mournful whistle of a screech owl came to my ears, the andante of the winter night. It seemed to intensify the freezing silence. I thought how at college I used to hear from my chamber the screech of trolley cars rounding a curve and biting my nerves. I thought of that lonely chamber, of all my life there, of Stella's life in the triple turmoil of New York. And I put out my hand and took hers into it, while she stirred in her sleep, her fingers unconsciously closing over mine. So we awoke in the morning, with the sunshine smiting the snow into diamonds and a chickadee piping for breakfast.

Chapter XXIII

SPRING IN THE GARDEN

THE excitement of our first spring at Twin Fires will probably never be equalled in our lives, though no spring can recur in a garden without its excitements. But about our first spring there was a glorious thrill of the unexpected which, alas! can come but once. To begin with, it was Stella's initiation into rural April, and the feet of the south wind walking up the land brought hourly miracles to her sight. In the second place, everything in the garden was an experiment. The new hotbeds were an experiment. The bulbs and perennials sown the year before were an experiment. The ramblers were an experiment. The fertilizers I put upon the soil (more or less to Mike's disgust) were an experiment. We were learning everything, and after all no rapture is quite like that of learning.

The last snow melted and the ice went out of the brook in March, but cold nasty weather followed for two weeks. We planted a row of Spencers on March 20th, but it was not till the first day of April that we could spade up 200-foot long rows in the vegetable garden and plant early peas, which I inoculated with

nitrogen-gathering bacteria while Mike looked on with unconcealed scorn. I tried to explain the growing process of legumes to him, but gave up the task as hopeless.

"Bugs!" he said. "Puttin' bugs in the soil! No good never came o' that. Manure's the thing."

About this time, too, we started the hotbeds, a long row of them on the south side of the kitchen. The fresh manure cost us $2 a load, for, owning but one horse, we did not have enough in our stable; and, as Stella said, the piles "steamed expensively," like small volcanoes, as they stood waiting in the sun after a warm, drenching shower. We were all impatience to start our beds, but Mike kept us waiting till the soil temperature had gone down. Then the sowing began. While Mike was putting in his beds large quantities of cauliflowers, which had proved one of our most profitable crops the year before, and celery and lettuce and tomatoes and peppers and radishes and cabbages, we divided our beds into one-foot squares, and sowed our different colours of antirrhinum, asters, stock, *Phlox Drummondi*, cosmos, annual larkspur, heliotrope, and *Dimorphotheca Aurantiaca*, a plant chosen by Stella because she said the name irresistibly appealed to a philologist. Later we agreed that that was about its only appeal.

While the hotbeds were sprouting, demanding their daily water and nightly cover, there was the ploughing to be done, the perennial beds to be uncovered, the new beds by the pool to be made ready, more pruning

to be accomplished, and consequently more litter to be removed, birds to be watched for excitedly, and crocus spears in the grass, and, of course, the little lawn beyond the pool to be sowed to grass, and some grass seeds worked into the sundial lawn, which was still thin and patchy.

"Oh, I don't know which is the real sign of spring," said Stella, one evening, as we wandered on the terrace before the south room and heard the shrill chorus of the Hylas from our swamp. "Sometimes I think it's the Hylas, on the first warm evening; sometimes I think it's the fox sparrows who appeared suddenly the other day at 10.01 A. M. while you were working, and began hippity-hopping all over the grass. Sometimes I think it's the soft coot-coot of our new hens in the sun. Sometimes I think it's a crocus leaf. Sometimes I think it's the steaming manure piles. Sometimes it seems to be the figures of Mike and Joe driving old Dobbin and the plough, against the sky and the lone pine, like a Millet painting."

"Lump them," I suggested. "It's all of them combined. In New York it is when the soda fountains have to be extended over the toothbrush counter."

"New York!" sniffed Stella. "There *is* no such place!"

April flew past us on gauzy wings, and May came, with violets by our brook and in our pasture, and the trilliums we had transplanted the year before burst into

bud. Nearly all our perennials had come through the winter, thanks to the sixty-seven days of snow, and the one plant of blue May phlox which had survived its fall planting made us eager for a second trial, the next time in early spring. More sowings of peas went into the ground. The sundial was set out. Hard Cider came to build our pergola, and the clematis vines arrived to grow over it. The grape arbour along the west side of the sundial lawn was also built, of plain chestnut. The perennials were all moved to their permanent places, the beds fertilized and trimmed.

About the first of May, too, I took a tip from Luther Burbank and put early corn into a mixture of leaf mould and fresh manure in a big box. When the time came the middle of the month for the first planting, my seeds had developed snaky white roots and stalks. Again to Mike's disgust, I made a long trench and put these sprouted seeds in thickly. In a couple of days they were up, and by the time his conventionally planted hills had sprouted, I had a long row of well-started corn which I thinned out to the strongest stalks.

"Now, Mike," said I, "I'll beat you and the town in the market."

"Well, bedad, it beats all how you fellers that don't know nothin' about farmin' can do some things," he said, regarding my corn with comical amazement.

"That's because we are willing to learn," said I, and left him still looking at the six-inch high stalks.

(Incidentally, I may remark that I did beat everybody in the market, and made about $15 extra by my simple experiment.)

But Stella's chief joy in the garden was in the surprises of the blooms: in the stately clumps of Darwins against the pillars of the rose aqueduct; in the golden bursts of daffodils here and there where we had sown a few bulbs and forgotten the spot; in the *Narcissus poeticus*, which were in their element close to the brook and did verily look at themselves in the tiny pool below the dam; in the pale gold ring of the great Empress narcissus bordering the iris spears around the large pool; above all, perhaps, in the maroon of the trilliums which we had brought home from that first wonderful walk in the woods. Not alone her heart, but her feet, danced with the daffodils, and I could hear her of a morning as I worked, out in the garden singing or bringing in great bunches of blooms to decorate the house.

On several afternoons we made further trips to the deep woods after wild-flower plants, and set them in along our brook. The thrush had returned, the apple blossoms had made all the garden fragrant while the plants were budding (this year they were carefully sprayed twice, for, though it cost nearly as much to spray them as the entire value of the apples, one thing I cannot stand on my farm is poor or neglected fruit; besides, the improved aspect of the trees themselves was worth the price). Now that their petals had fallen

came the new fragrance, subtler but no less exquisite, of many flowers after May rain, of a spring brook running under pines, and near the house the pungent aroma of lilacs.

Then came the German irises, like soldiers on parade, around the pool, and the bright lemon lilies in the shady dooryard. Scarce had the irises begun to fall when the foxgloves began to blossom, and all suddenly one morning after a very warm night the sundial was surrounded by a stately conclave of slender queens dressed in white and lavender, while more queens marched down from the orchard to the pool, and yet more stood against the shrubbery beyond it, or half hid the bare newness of our grape arbour.

"I don't need to take digitalis internally for a heart stimulant!" cried Stella. "Oh, the lovely things! Quick, vases of them below the Hiroshiges! Quick, your camera! Quick, come and look at them, come and see the bees swinging in their bells!"

"I suppose they are breakfast bells," said I.

"This is no time for bad puns," she answered, dragging me swiftly down through the orchard, and up again to the sundial.

Indeed, the June morning was beautiful, and the foxgloves ringing the white dial post above the fresh green of our lawn had an indescribable air of delicate stateliness in the sun. And they were murmurous with bees. Again and again that morning I looked up from my

work and saw them there, in the focussed sunlight, saw my wife hovering over them, saw beyond them, through the rose arches, Mike and Joe at work on the farm, saw still farther away the procession of my pines, and then the far hills and the blue sky. Again, at quiet evening, when a white-throated sparrow and an oriole were competing in song, we watched the foxgloves turn to white ghosts glimmering in the dusk, we heard the bird songs die away, the shrill of night insects arise, and then the tinkle of our brook came into consciousness, as it ran ever riverward in the night.

"The spring melts into summer," said Stella, "as gently as the little brook runs toward the sea. I wish it would linger, though. Oh, John, couldn't we build a dam and hold back the spring? A little pool of spring forever in our garden?"

"We shall have to make that pool within our hearts," said I.

Chapter XXIV

SOME RURAL PROBLEMS

THERE are many mysteries of marriage, quite unanticipated by the bachelor before he changes his state. Not the least of them is the new range of social relations and impulses which follow a happy union. I do not mean social relations with a capital S. About such I know little and care less. Presumably marriage may bring them, also, into the life of a man who chooses the wrong wife. In fact, Stella and I have seen more than one case of it in Bentford, where we dwell near enough to the fringes of Society to observe the parasitic aspirations of several ladies with more fortune than "position." Mrs. Eckstrom, we have discovered since her call, is such a one. We, of course, were of no use to her, and she had not troubled us since, though two gold fish did arrive that night, as I have told. We are grateful for Antony and Cleopatra.

No, what I mean by social relations and impulses are the opportunities for service and the impulses to jump in and help others, which matrimony discloses and breeds. Who can say why this is so? Who can say why the bachelor is generally negatively—if not ac-

tively—selfish, while the same man when he has achieved a good wife, opened a house of his own, begun to employ labour directly instead of through the medium of a club or bachelor apartment hotel, is suddenly aware of wrong conditions in the world about him and a new desire to help set them right? It cannot entirely be due to the woman, for very often her maiden life has been as barren of social service as his own. It is inherent in the state of matrimony, and to me it seems one of the glories of that state. Those couples who have not felt it, I think, have been but sterilely mated, though they have reproduced their kind never so many times.

At any rate, it was not long after the Eckstrom invasion that Stella and I went to play golf, carrying a load of lettuce heads and cauliflowers to market on our way. As all Bert's cauliflowers are sold in bulk to a New York commission merchant, I found I had the local market pretty much to myself, and was getting 15 cents a head for my plants. Mike dearly loved cauliflowers, and babied ours as a flower gardener babies his hybrid tea roses. They were splendid heads, and were bringing me in a dollar a day or more. I had visions of greatly increasing my output another season, for I could easily supply the two hotels as well.

We left our farm wagon in the church horse-sheds and went down to the links. There was a crowd of caddies of all ages sitting on the benches reserved for them, and

half a dozen came rushing toward us. I chose a large boy, because I am one of those idiots who carries around at least seven more clubs than he ever uses, and Stella picked a smaller boy because she liked his face. As golf is not an engrossing game when you are playing with your wife, and she's a beginner into the bargain (matrimony has its drawbacks, too!) we fell to talking with our caddies.

"You must be in the high school, eh?" said I to mine.

"I went last year," he replied, "but I ain't goin' no more. Goin' to work."

"Work at your age? What are you going to do?" asked Stella.

"I dunno—somethin'," he answered.

"Why don't you keep on at school?" I said.

"Aw, what's the use?" said he. "They don't learn you nothin'—algebra and English and stuff like that."

"A little English wouldn't hurt you at all, young man," said Stella. "You don't like to study, do you?"

The boy looked sheepish, but admitted that he didn't.

"What do you like to do?" I asked. "You don't like to caddy very well, because you don't keep your eye on the ball, and you've made the little fellow take out the pin on every hole so far."

The boy flushed at this, and went up to the next pin himself.

"I'd like to work in a garden," he said, as we were walking to the next tee.

"You want to be a gardener, eh?" said I. "Has anybody ever taught you how to start a hotbed?"

"No, sir."

"Ever run a wheel hoe?"

"No, sir."

"Would you know what date to plant early peas, and corn, and lima beans?"

"No, sir."

"Ever graft an apple tree?"

"No, sir."

"Well, you're not very well fitted to take a job as a gardener yet, are you?" said I.

He admitted that he wasn't.

"Would you keep on going to school if they taught you how to be a gardener?" asked Stella, carrying on the line of questioning.

"You bet," he replied. "But, gee! they don't teach nothin' like that. Only bookkeepin' and typewritin', and then you have to go away to a business college somewhere before you can get a job."

"We seem to have stumbled on a civic problem," I remarked to my wife as we teed up. "I don't believe an educational survey would do this town any harm."

"And the finger of destiny points to us?" she smiled.

"Probably," said I. "You'd hardly expect the Eckstroms to tackle the job!"

That night we began by consulting Bert. Bert is one of the best men I know, and he applies the latest methods to growing cauliflowers; but he's a New England farmer, none the less, and he has the true "rural mind."

"'Vocational education!'" he exclaimed. "We got more education than we kin afford now. Taxes are way up, an' the school appropriation's the biggest one we have—$19,000, to only $7,000 for the roads! And then you talk about more! We got along pretty well without it so far."

"Have you, though?" said Stella. "You've got a high school, but how many boys have you got in it?"

"I dunno," said Bert.

"That's it. You don't know. You don't know anything about what your schools are doing. You must be on the school committee!"

Bert grinned at this. "No, I ain't," he said, "but I guess I'm ez good ez them that are. They do say Buckstone—you know, the man who runs the meat market—engages teachers on their looks."

"Not a bad idea," said Stella; "looks mean a lot to children."

"Not the kind Buckie's after, I reckon," said Bert. "But you two go run your farm an' don't worry about this town. We'll git along."

Bert spoke good naturedly, but we felt, none the less, as if he were rebuking us.

"He thinks we are butting in," said Stella, as we walked home. "I suppose you have to live in a New England town thirty years before you are really a citizen. Well, I'm getting my mad up. Let's butt!"

We next consulted Mrs. Pillig on the subject, and found her as stiffly opposed to vocational education as Bert, but on entirely different grounds.

"I don't want my boy educated as if he wa'n't as good as anybody else's," she said. "Just because I'm poor is no reason why my boy shouldn't be fitted to go to college same as young Carl Swain."

Carl Swain was the son of the village bank president. He, I happened to know, had been obliged to go to Phillips Andover for a year after his graduation from our high school before he could get into college.

"In the first place," I answered, "your high school doesn't fit for college now. In the second place, is Peter going to college?"

"Of course he ain't," said Mrs. Pillig.

"Then why not educate him in some way that will really fit him to make a better living, and be a better man?" said Stella.

"I want he should have what the rest have," the mother stoutly maintained.

Stella shook her head. "It's hopeless," she whispered.

I mentioned the matter next to Mr. Swain, when I was in the bank. He, too, was a true New Englander, of a different class from Bert, but with the fundamental

conservatism—to give it the pleasantest name possible.

"There's too much fol-de-rol in the school now," he said. "If they'd just try to teach 'em Greek and Latin and the things you need for a liberal education and the college entrance examinations, I wouldn't have had to send my boy to Andover."

"Your boy, yes," I answered. "How many other boys and girls in his class are going to college?"

"Well, there's another one," he replied.

"Out of a class of how many?"

"Twenty," said he.

"Hm—you want to make your school entirely for the 10 per cent., then?"

He had no very adequate reply, and I departed, wondering anew at human selfishness. My next encounter was with the rector. He didn't believe in vocational education, either. He had one of those vague and paradoxically commendable though entirely fallacious reasons for his opposition which are almost the hardest to combat, because they are grounded in the fetish of the old "humanist" curriculum (which when it originated was strictly vocational). He didn't believe that trade instruction educated. There was no "culture" in it. I left him, wondering if Matthew Arnold hadn't done as much harm as good in the world.

After that, Stella and I hunted up the superintendent of schools. We brought him and his wife over to

dinner, and sat in the orchard afterward, talking. He was a pleasant man, who seemed to take a grateful interest in our enthusiasm, but supplied no hope.

"Yes," he said, "there are seventy-one girls and eleven boys in the high school. It ought to be plain that something is wrong. But you are in the Town Meeting belt here, Mr. Upton, and you've got to get your arguments through the skulls of every voter in the place before we can have any money to work with. The Town Meeting is your truest democracy, they say. Perhaps that is why Germany has so much better schools than we do in rural New England!"

I didn't quite believe him then, but I do now. I have seen a Bentford Town Meeting! Stella and I made a survey of the town during the ensuing autumn and winter, with the aid of the Town Clerk and the list of voters. As I have said, there are no manufactories of any sort in Bentford. It is exclusively a residence village, with a considerable summer population of wealthy householders who pay the great bulk of our taxes, and a considerable outlying rural population engaged (however desultorily) in agriculture. Our figures showed that out of a total voting population of six hundred and one males, one hundred and twenty were directly employed in some capacity as gardeners or caretakers on the estates of others, one hundred and forty were at least part time farmers, though they worked on the roads and did other jobs of a similar

nature when they could, and at least fifty more were engaged in manual labour in some way connected with the soil or with the roads or trees. Three hundred and ten out of a total of six hundred and one, then, of the adult males of Bentford, were in a position to benefit by agricultural education—a truly tremendous proportion. At the same time we learned that exactly eighteen boys had gone to higher institutions of learning from the village in the past decade, and a slightly greater number of girls—most of the latter to normal school.

It was with such overwhelming figures as these, backed up by the promise of state aid for an approved agricultural course, which would reduce the expenses of the town to $500 a year, that the superintendent of schools and I, supported by a few members of the Grange, went before the town at the annual Town Meeting in March, and asked for an appropriation. Our article in the warrant was laid on the table. The appropriation committee refused to endorse it. The town was too poor. It was going to cost $9,000 for roads that year.

This would be rather amusing if it weren't, as Stella points out, so terribly tragic. The roads cost us $9,000 not alone because we do not employ a road superintendent, and don't know how to build them right, still employing the ancient American method of scraping back the gutters to crown the road anew every spring (and this soil, furthermore, is now so saturated with

oil that it makes a pudding whenever there is a heavy frost), but because a great deal of the money evaporates in petty graft. I had supposed that Tammany Hall was the great grafting institution till I moved to a New England small town. There I learned Tammany Hall was, relatively, a mere child. I've told how selectman Morrissy scraped my lawn—admitting I was party to the crime. Since then I have learned how this same Morrissy sold gravel to the town at 50 cents a load, from a gravel bed the town already owned, and, as selectman, O. K'd his own bill! I have seen how our "honest farmers" rush to gobble their share of that road appropriation as soon as Town Meeting is over, hauling gravel where a good deal of the time it isn't needed, if the roads are properly made, getting their teams on the job about an hour after contract time and taking them home at night an hour early, and seeing to it that all of the $9,000 is spent before July, so there is nothing to repair roads with in the autumn. Of course some roads do have to be repaired in the autumn, so the selectmen used to overdraw the appropriation, and the town was so much the poorer, and couldn't afford an extra $500 to educate its children properly. The law has at least stopped the overdraft, but we still lack the $500.

If an honest selectman gets into office and tries to let out a road contract to a scientific builder, a storm of protest goes up that he is taking away the bread from

town labour, and the next year he is so snowed under at the polls that you never hear of him again. He is snowed under with equal effectiveness if he tries to keep town labour up to contract, or tries to take away the vicious drug-store liquor license. Fifty per cent. of our working population are grafters, even when they don't know it. Twenty-five per cent. of our people—the richest taxpayers, who are summer residents—don't care anyhow, so long as they can get men to look after their estates. Also, these rich men are grafters, too, of the worst kind, because they never declare a half of their taxable personal property. Those of us who are left are, as the expressive phrase goes, "up against it."

That is what I told Stella as we came home from our first Town Meeting. I was blue, despondent, ready to give up.

"Twenty-five per cent. who really cared," said she, "could reform the universe. Reform is like the dictionary—it takes infinite patience. The first thing is to get the 25 per cent. together."

"You're right!" I cried, taking heart again. "There's plenty of work for our hands ahead! They think in Bentford that we are mere upstarts because we've lived here only a year or two. But that is just why we can see so many things which must be altered. We've got to keep our batteries on the firing line. We've got plenty of work besides getting these hotbeds ready for the spring planting and uncovering our perennials."

We had reached home, and, as I concluded, we were standing by the woodshed contemplating the new hotbed sashes which had not been used the spring before.

It was those sashes which gave me the idea of school gardens, I think. If we couldn't have real vocational instruction, at least we might have school gardens, with volunteer instruction and prizes awarded, perhaps, by the Grange. I sent away that evening for bulletins on the subject, and presently took the matter up with the school superintendent and the master of the Grange. Results speedily followed. I discovered that, after all, what our town chiefly lacked (and, inferentially, what similar towns chiefly lack) was a spirit of coöperation among those working for improvement. The selectmen cheerfully gave the use of a piece of town land for the gardens. One of our farmers cheerfully volunteered to plough it. The Grange voted small money prizes as an incentive to the children. And two gardeners on one of the large estates (one of them an Englishman, at that, who was not a citizen) volunteered to come down to the gardens on alternate days, at five o'clock, and give instruction. Finally, our Congressman from the district sent quantities of government seeds, and more were donated by one of the local storekeepers. In two weeks we had a piece of land, nicely ploughed and harrowed, divided into more than twenty little squares, and in each square you could see of an afternoon a small boy toiling. We had the beginnings of vocational in-

struction. It had been entirely accomplished by voluntary coöperation among the minority who saw the need for it.

I was talking this over one day with our new selectman, an Irish-American who had practically grown up into the management of one of the large estates, where he had a perfectly free hand, and his natural strength of character had been developed by responsibility.

"The trouble is," he said, "that we organize for political parties, for personal ends, for the election of individuals, but we don't organize for the town. I believe we could start a Town Club, say of twenty-five or fifty men, with the sole object of talking over what the town needs, and inaugurating civic movements. That club would bring together forces that are now scattered and helpless, and put the weight of numbers behind them. There would be no politics in such a club. It would be for the town, not for a party."

He carried out his idea, too, and the Bentford Town Club was the result. It meets now once every month, and it gives voice to the hitherto scattered and ineffectual minority.

It was this same selectman who altered some of my ideas about grafting. I remarked one day that the town didn't get more than 60 cents' worth of labour for every dollar it spent, and he answered: "Well, if we didn't pay some of those men $2 a day to shovel gravel on the roads, or to break out the snowdrifts in

winter, we'd have to pay for their keep in some other way. They would be 'on the town.'"

"On the town!" The phrase haunted me. I walked home past the golf links, where comfortable males in knickerbockers were losing 75-cent balls, past two estates that cost a hundred thousand dollars apiece, past the groggy signpost which pointed to Albany and Twin Fires, and saw my own pleasant acres, with the white house above the orchard slope, the ghost of Rome in roses marching across the sundial lawn, the fertile tillage beyond. Far off in every direction stretched the green countryside to the ring of hills. Why should anybody, in such a pleasant land, be "on the town?" Why should some of us own acres upon acres of this land and others own nothing? None of us made the land. None of us cleared it, won it from the wilderness. If any white men had a right to it to-day, surely they would be the descendants of the original pioneers. Yet one of those descendants now did our washing, and owned but a scrubby acre of the great tract which had once stood in her ancestor's name. Why had the acres slipped away in the intervening generations? In that case, I knew. The land had gone to pay for the liquor which had devastated the stock. In other cases, no doubt, a similar cause could be found. Then, too, in many cases the best blood of the families had gone away to feed the cities—to make New York great. The weaker blood had remained behind, not to mingle with

fresh blood, but to cross too often with its own strain, till something perilously close to degeneracy resulted.

"On the town!" The town had once been a community of hardy pioneers, all firm in the iron faith of Calvin and Jonathan Edwards, all independent and self-respecting, even though they did call themselves "poor worms" on the Sabbath. The faith and the independence alike were gone. They bled the town for little jobs, badly done, to keep out of the poorhouse. The rugged pioneer community had become, I suddenly saw, a rural backwater. The great tide of agricultural prosperity had swept on to the West; industrial prosperity had withdrawn into the cities. We, in rural New England, were entering the twentieth century with a new problem on our hands.

And I felt utterly helpless to solve it. But it has never since then ceased to be troublesome in the background of my consciousness, and when I see the road work being done by "town labour," I think of what that means; I think of the farms abandoned to summer estates or weeds, the terrible toll of whiskey and cider, the price the city has exacted of the country, the pitiful end of these my brothers of the Pilgrim breed. I reflect that even in Twin Fires we cannot escape the terrible problems of the modern world. This is the leaden lining to that silver cloud which floats in the blue above our dwelling.

Chapter XXV

HORAS NON NUMERO NISI SERENAS

BUT this story is, after all, an idyl, and the idyl is drawing to its close. Even as the Old Three Decker carried tired people to the Islands of the Blest, my little tale can only end with "and they lived happy ever after." Into the sweet monotony of such happy years what reader wants to follow? The reader sees his fellow passengers, the characters, disembark, waves them good-bye—and turns to sail for other isles! So please consider that the hawsers are being loosed, the farewells being spoken.

That second summer at Twin Fires, of course, showed us many things yet to be done. Neither Rome nor the humblest garden was ever built in a day. Our ramblers did their duty well, but the grape arbour and the pergola would not be covered properly in a season. There were holes in the flower beds to be filled by annuals, and mistakes made in succession, so that July found us with many patches destitute of any bloom. Out in the vegetable area there were first cutworms and then drought and potato blight to be contended with. In our ignorance we neglected to watch the hollyhocks

for red rust till suddenly whole plants began to die, and we had to spray madly with Bordeaux and pull off a great heap of infected leaves, to save any blooms at all. There were clearings to be made in the pines for ferny spots, and constant work to be done about the pool to keep the wild bushes from coming back. There were chickens to be looked after now, also, and new responsibilities in the village for both of us. We had neither attempted nor desired to avoid our full share of civic work. We lived a busy life, with not an hour in the day idle, and few hours in the evening. We lived so full a life, indeed, that it was only by preserving an absolute routine for my own bread-winning labours, from nine A. M. till one, that I was able to resist the siren call of farm and garden, and get my daily stint accomplished.

The preceding summer I had made about $200 out of my produce, which in my first naïve enthusiasm pleased me greatly. But it was surely a poor return on my investment, reckoned merely in dollars and cents, and the second season showed a different result. Having two cows and a small family, I managed to dispose of my surplus milk and cream to a farmer who ran a milk route. This brought me in $73 a year. As I further saved at least $100 by not having to buy milk, and $60 by Peter's efforts at the churn, and could reckon a further profit from manure and calves, my cows were worth between $300 and $400 a year to me. Now that we had hens and chickens, we could reckon

on another $100 saved in egg and poultry bills. To this total I was able to add at the end of the summer more than $500 received from the sale of fruit and vegetables, not only to the market but to the hotels. I was the only person in Bentford who had cultivated raspberries for sale, for instance, and the fact that I could deliver them absolutely fresh to the hotels was appreciated in so delicate a fruit. Stella and Peter were the pickers. I also supplied the inns with peas, cauliflowers, and tomatoes. Thus the farm was actually paying me in cash or saving at least $1,000 a year—indeed, much more, since we had no fruit nor vegetable bills the year through, Mrs. Pillig being an artist in preserving what would not keep in the cellar. But we will call it $1,000, and let the rest go as interest on the investment represented by seeds and implements. To offset this, I paid Mike $600 a year, and employed his son Joe at $1.75 a day, for twenty weeks. This left me a profit of about $200 on my first full season at Twin Fires, which paid my taxes and bought my coal. Out of my salary, then, came no rent, no bills for butter, eggs, milk, poultry, nor vegetables. I had to pay Mrs. Pillig her $20 a month therefrom, I had to pay the upkeep of the place, and grocery and meat bills (the latter being comparatively small in summer). But with the great item of rent eliminated, and my farm help paying for itself, it was astonishing to me to contemplate what a beautiful, comfortable home we were able to afford

on an income which in New York would coop us in an Upper West Side apartment. We had thirty acres of beautiful land, we had a brook, a pine grove, an orchard, a not too formal garden, a lovely house in which we were slowly assembling mahogany furniture which fitted it. We had summer society as sophisticated as we cared to mix with, and winter society to which we could give gladly of our own stores of knowledge or enthusiasm and find joy in the giving. We had health as never before, and air and sunshine and a world of beauty all about us to the far blue wall of hills.

Above all, we had the perpetual incentive of gardening to keep our eyes toward the future. A true garden, like a life well lived, is forever becoming, forever in process, forever leading on toward new goals. Life, indeed, goes hand in hand with your garden, and never a fair thought but you write it in flowers, never a beautiful picture but you paint it if you can, and with the striving learn patience, and with the half accomplishment, the "divine unrest."

Horas Non Numero Nisi Serenas

reads the ancient motto on our dial plate, and as I look back on the years of Twin Fires' genesis, or forward into the future, the hours that are not sunny are indeed not marked for me. I am writing now at a table beneath the pergola. The floor is of brick, laid (somewhat irregularly) by Stella and me, for we still are poor, as the

Eckstroms would reckon poverty, and none of what Mrs. Deland has called "the grim inhibitions of wealth" prevents us from doing whatever we can with our own hands, and finding therein a double satisfaction. Over my head rustle the thick vines—a wistaria among them, which may or may not survive another winter.

It is June again. The ghost of Rome in roses is marching across the lawn beyond the white sundial, and there are arches in perspective now beneath the level superstructure. The little brick bird bath is covered with ivy, and last year's self-sown double Emperor Williams are already blue about it. The lawn is a thick, rich green. To the west the grape arbour rises above a white bench of real marble, and I can see dappled shadows beneath the whitish young leaves. I know that around the pool stately Japanese iris are budding now, great clumps of them revelling in the moisture they so dearly love, soon to break into blooms as large as plates, and beyond them is a little lawn, with the bench our own hands made against a clump of cedars, and on each side a small statue of marble on a slender chestnut pedestal, carved and painted to balance the bench.

I know also that a path now wanders up the brook almost to the road, amid the wild tangle, and ends suddenly in the most unexpected nook beneath a willow tree, where irises fringe a second tiny pool. I know that the path still wanders the other way into the pines—pines larger now and more murmurous of the sea—past

beds of ferns and a lone cardinal flower that will bloom in a shaft of sunlight. Somewhere down that path my wife is wandering, and she is not alone. A little form (at least she says it has form!) sleeps beside her, while she sits, perhaps, with a book or more likely with sewing in her busy fingers, or more likely still with hands that stray toward the sleeping child and ears that listen to the sea-shell murmur of the pines whispering secrets of the future. Is he to be a Napoleon or a Pasteur? No less a genius, surely, the prophetic pines whisper to the listening mother!

My own pen halts in its progress and the ink dries on the point.

Horas Non Numero Nisi Serenas

—that indeed we desire for our children, for our loved ones! Dim, forgotten perils of adolescence come to my mind, as a cloud obscures the summer sun. Then the cloud sweeps by. I see the white dial post focussing the sunlight once again on the green lawn, amid its ring of stately queens, and the thought comes over me not that I possess these thirty acres of Twin Fires, but that they possess me, that they are mine only in trust to do their bidding, to hand them on still fairer than I found them to the new generation of my stock. They are the Upton home—forever.

Already we have bought a tall grandfather's clock, with little Nat's name and birth date on a plate inside

the door. I can hear it ticking somnolently now, out in the hall. Already the quaint rubbish is accumulating in our attic which in twenty years will be a dusty, historical record of many things, from sartorial styles to literary fashions. Some day little Nat will rummage them for forgotten books of his childhood, and come upon my derby, now in the latest fashion, to wonder that men ever wore such outlandish headgear.

But the garden will never be out of fashion! Looking forth again from the window, I can see our best discovery of last season beginning to scatter its bits of sky on the ground, as it does every day before noon. It is flax, which blooms every day at sunrise the season through, sheds all its petals when the sun is high, and renews them all with the next day's dew. It is perfectly hardy and reproduces itself in great quantity. No blue is quite like it save the sky, and at seven o'clock of a fresh June morning you will go many a mile before you find anything so lovely as our garden borders. A little later, too, the first sowing of our schyzanthus will begin to flower, against a backing of white platycodons, and that will be an old-fashioned feature of delicate bloom perpetually new, for the little butterfly flower, as it used to be called, covering the entire graceful plant with orchidlike blossoms, is one of those shyer effects that the professional gardeners never strive for, but which we amateurs who are poor enough to be our own gardeners achieve, to put the great expensive formal gardens to

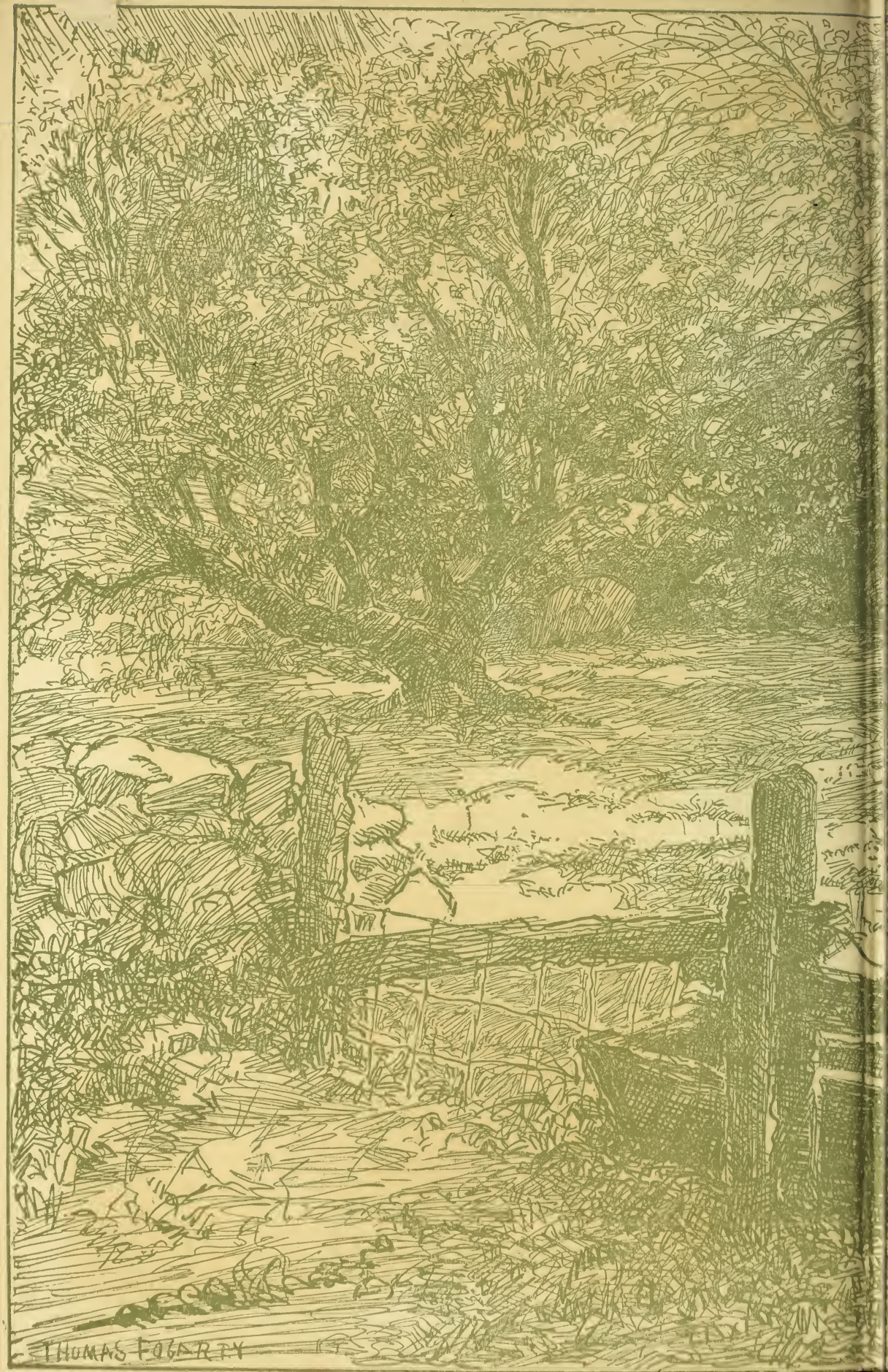
shame. Another bed we are proud of is filled with love-in-a-mist rising out of sweet alyssum—all feathery blue and white, like our own skies. But we, too, have the showier effects. Already the best of them is coming—about a hundred feet of larkspur along the west wall of the garden, and at its base pink Canterbury bells. Unfortunately, the bells will be passing as the larkspur comes to its fullest flower, but for about four or five days in ordinary seasons that particular border of pink and blue is a rare delight.

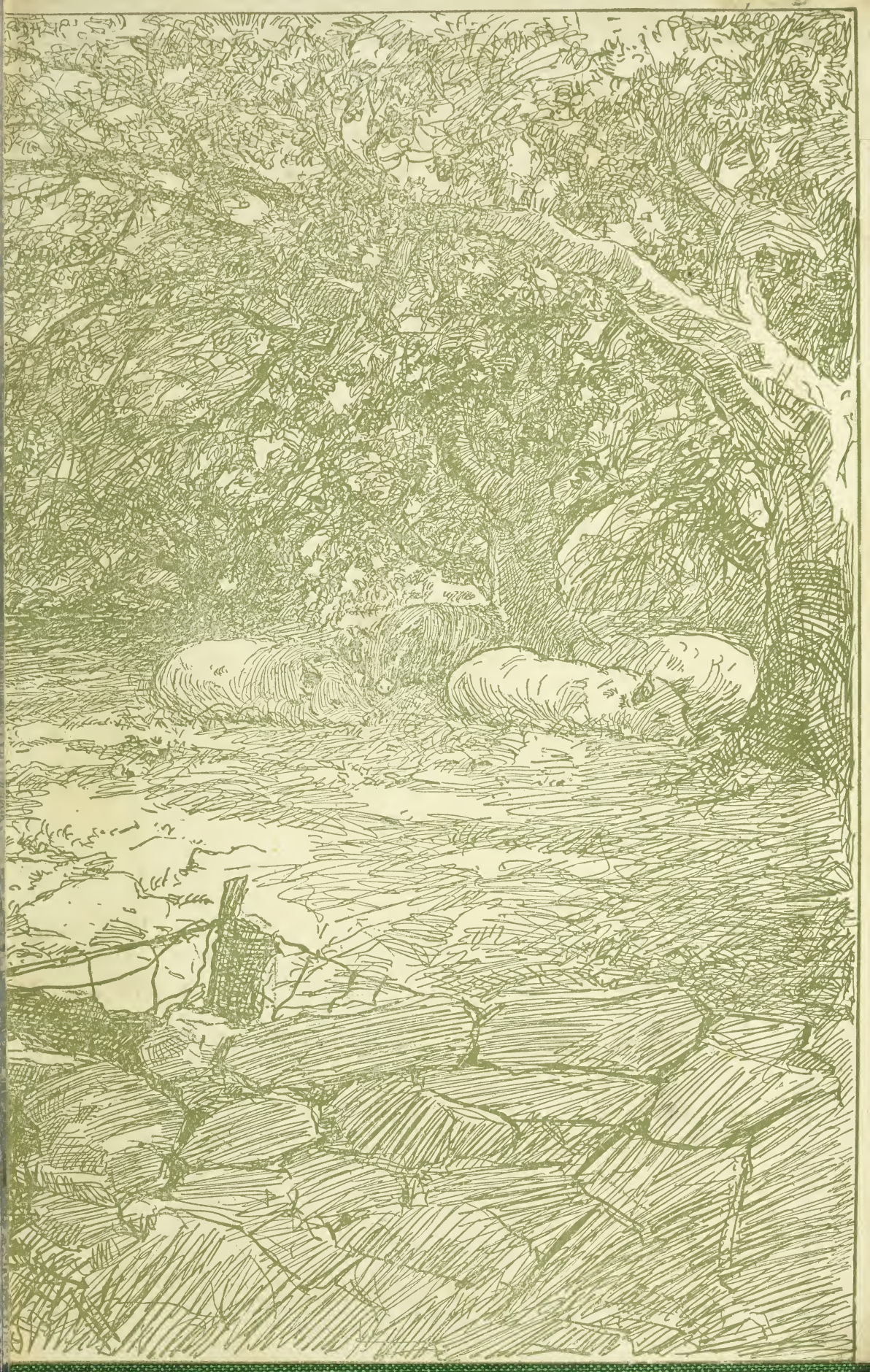
I wonder, by the way, if Stella has watered the schyzanthus plants this morning. They are down in the borders by the pool. Perhaps I had better go and see. A moment's respite from my toil will do me good. I will listen to the tinkle of the brook, as I will follow the path that wanders beside it through the maples to the pines, where our garden is but the reproduction in little of our fair New England woods. At the spot where first we heard the hermit sing I shall find my wife and child, I shall find them for whom all my strivings are, who give meaning to my life, who, when all is said, are the sunshine of its serene hours. What a blue sky overhead where the cloud ships ride! What a burst of song from the oriole! What a pleasant sound from the field beyond the roses—the soft chip of Mike's hoe between the onions! And hark, from the pines a tiny cry! Can he want his father?

THE END



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